# Sulfur 28

BRUCE ANDREWS ● BLAISE CENDRARS
CLARK COOLIDGE ● PETAH COYNE
WOLFGANG GIEGERICH ● SUSAN HOWE
MILTON KESSLER ● BARBARA MOR
CAMILLE PAGLIA ● KURT SCHWITTERS

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TYPESETTING BY LAZERTYPE, SANTA ROSA, CA

A LITERARY BI-ANNUAL OF THE WHOLE ART

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**COVER: NANCY SPERO / SHEELA & WILMA**
1985, Detail, 20" x 110", Hand-printed Collage on Paper [Courtesy of Josh Baer Gallery, NYC]


Petah Coyne's sculpture is reproduced courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, NYC.

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# BARBARA MOR
## *from* OIL

You are in the bar, laughing  your bracelets are ropes of oil
night moves toward death, it moves thru you
(opening sediments of sleek thighs, drilled by money)
black eruptions on a stage of bored muscle
is the dance of the mother twisted in expensive chains
hooded eyes slide sideways on swivels of light
imminent glaciers clink in fingers against the holocausts of glass
and your head is back, singing, teeth as a white precipice
the room slides forward, over you, on thick wheels
(these are nights of victory, it is the father's hour)

and thru all bodies, underground tunnels, where jobs are done
and rats' eyes are bulbs in wire cages, fatal
cars, insects of stealth and gears move, urine civilizations
into the wounds of buildings, exoskeletal bedrooms,
deposit eggs of oil in the mouths of sleepers, and
cunts of mothers giving birth in hall toilets
(this is the father's luxury, wombs of cracked porcelain,
hotel spasms of businessmen shot thru gray drains)
biologic eons flushed down vaginas rented by the night,
stench and dollars transact your sex in swirling Lysol
the clocks of hearts convulse, this is absolute time
voyeurs watch death reproduce itself, cold level by level
dismembered hands of buildings, lighting cigarettes w/ripped
    music
rise and fall of stained elevators thru your body's ecstasy

so night moves down corridors, arrangements of throats
as purses of bodies open, drunk on money
the baby cries for milk, vomits batteries and thin oil

skittering shoes of the father run over the crib sheets
and cockroaches of radio words peel the walls
sinister wallets, underground leathers, stop beyond doors
(the dying mother bequeaths her last sensation, raped by metal)
chemical stairs dissolve the starving feet that run from her
this is the father's vision of a life

*

Her cunt was oil, and her lipstick and her voice, and
wings rising from swamp forests dripping scales of light
from her, and the wind was oil, and footprints
and highways, huge skeletal shadows crawling thru black pitch
toward her name, and the seas are oil
the dazzling rigs of cities are oil,
her fingernails are oil, tides surge blackly
at the edges of her hands
her heart is oil, sliding open in the dark like a warehouse
where trucks unload their black lines, fossils
of endless cries

oil is her body, turning in slick beds
among shells and repeated eyelids, packed in silence
the bending of ferns and gestures of
enormous flight, arm bones dripping with black gravity
oil is her breath fractioned from wreckyards, from night pools
diatoms and bolts of insects on fire, crushed inside her
the exhalations shine in windows, on beasts' necks
twisted in rubble, the roar
of oil rising in long elegant throats
erupting in black music, jet heads
inside the flames, whining and gnashing glassy foliage
her whispers in steel blades, the hisses
of elevators, jewels
of sweat drip from light, glide as reptile shadows, return
to original oil in the basements of eons, body gears
grind into her liquid stations, spider webs
corpse hands, subterranean cables, the telephone she uses
to call you into the last night

black rayon draped over nothing, oil is her throat
and her eyes, vinyl apertures the mood
falls into, and spins in thin disks thru a dark machinery
small wires of insects suck from electric flowers,
and the pistils are oil, and green wounds of lawns
oil is her breasts, and the children's
black toys, the fruits of the trees are oil, the roots, the seeds,
radios of singing teeth that scatter them
nets thrown from her kitchen, her linoleum thighs, her deaths
sliding across retinas, stab wounds
rapes, interior mining, where oil drips from her screaming
on the livingroom rug, on bar stools, on groins unzipped
in such exotic theaters

ink is oil, ink hemorrhages from a mind
convulsed as earth by mute drilling, the terror of
thought rushing to describe it
as her eyes rush to mirrors breaking inside
her, oil is sleep
oozing from crevasses, warm fur of animals flayed
in a vast silence, large desks of men with
children rotting on papers, in moist drawers, her red lips
sliding down metallic torsos
the sperm of executives thickens in quiet bays, wild birds
struggle to rise, cries choked on white graphs,
final numbers, oil is her tongues
plummeting like sirens at noon, the black words
spreading over blank pages of sky,
torn pages of water

she is oil in the supernatural engines, the
dream of oil glistening on dull bones, steel tanks thru
snow tracking solitary blood drops, the woman with victorious
teeth
advertising death traps and smiles
her long arm wraps around towns of ice, her body cells
growing like a thick blanket, as the mothers die
in agony, the fathers die, she covers them
as dinosaurs and ancient forests, humus

from the bowels of tractors, gray antennae cracking
fertile skulls of buildings,
long shins cracked and sucked for their dark fuel
oil seeps thru veins, conduits, bedroom walls, with stains
like bruises and inexorable birth she
covers them, multiplying
children from a deep well, the
slick air becomes them, and the dead sea, and spurts of
black milk entering the slippery mouths, she gushes
generations who become her, the pupils of
their eyes sleek and widening

*

There are nets in the eye that catch the light, images
like wild beasts are gathered in, tints of flesh
moving thru high grasses, blades of helicopters rounding up
stray clouds, a white horse
rears behind a chain-link fence, a woman convulses
thru the thick eyelashes of death, hidden cameras who capture
earth like prey, angles of skin thrashing and
the steel neighing of the wind, and bodies falling slowly
inward to the spread retina,
as the drowned sink thru darkening lenses of the sea

skeins groping, gathering what is done, naked bodies
on ocean bottom wrapped in
baling wire, blind maps, powerlines coiled as serpents, veins
of rabid dogs, ancient fish swim by,
growing gears and claws, the brain
is drawing black lines around the faces of windows, bored guns
stretch out calm along the sides of sharks
submarines sunk between tall buildings, dinosaurs
in extinct shoulders of engineers, stars, what is left of
neon wedged in dark throats
shiny black lines stitch up anemones, vulvas, the sucking mouths
of the great crowd, continents
wounded like beasts trailing bandages of water, images
twist in the brain like

snapshots of caught fish, trussed
with ropes of salt and imploding umbilical knots

mortices and scales of deep museums, reptiles of
cold walls, long echoes, the weight of oceans on locked glass
cases
of eyelids, cracks in stone where horses
are leaping, hooves thrashing out
nerve-nets hang in underground rooms, strung with pale tissue,
wrenches of iron, ganglia open their mouths
and the wind screams thru them, tapestries evolve thru skulls
in peristaltic rolls, the history of protoplasm
of surgery, of mirrors, lost civilizations with their skins
preserved around steel bowels, calcium blueprints
in the tile of floors where
people danced ten thousand years below the sea

sunk in beds of gravity and black fire, basalt
stitches flagellates and cities from
our still bones, and bellies of spiders drift among the waters
with silent engines, all nets are loosened
in a steady breathing,
and tightened again, and loosened again, as photons and
worlds are woven and undone by
the retina, as eons sink thru night
with its webbed hands.

# TYRUS MILLER

# THE DESERT, THE WAR, AND THE UNDERGROUND

*Is there anyone who has not once been stunned, emerging from the Métro into the open air, to step into brilliant sunlight? And yet the sun shone a few minutes earlier, when he went down, just as brightly. So quickly has he forgotten the weather of the upper world. And as quickly the world in its turn will forget him.*

—Walter Benjamin

## MYTH, TROPISM

The desert, the war, and the underground. Something binds them in compulsory relation, an interchangeability, a circulation of terms. Each a kind of limit of the human order, thus a way of disappearing: the desert extends beyond the city's border, war serves as the deadly "other means" of politics, the underground accepts the deceased in the embrace of burial. California's Death Valley, a dried-up lake bed depressed below sea level, emblematizes this interlaced romance in which all must vanish, its very name linking passage into the desert with those other routes to invisibility: dying and going underground.

We resist it, we find this tropic inclination of terms improbable, inapt. It seems to invoke a mythic logic that offends our sense of legitimate connection. Yet, we ourselves, in our global dominion, the expansion of human powers to the reaches of the planet, have activated the channels by which this mythic atavism has become sober, present fact. Battering against the limits of horizontal extension, we introvert our forces, honed by centuries of surface conquest, to plumb the sub-surface spaces in which we would occult the grinning teeth of our transience.

Live burial against the recognition of death.

## AXENIC MAN

Imagine (as Gabriel Tarde did, late in the nineteenth century) that in the wake of the huge wars and alliances that shook the foundations of national power, the sun one day sputters and begins to wane. At once the earth starts to feel the chill of deep space, the oceans freeze and snow buries the populated land masses. The remnants of humanity, those privileged enough to have access to the reserves of fuel, gather in the warmest spot on the planet, the Sahara desert. From there they venture the last hope of the human race to survive: they go underground. Nature is dead forever, and the new humanity, warmed by the body of the earth itself, must forge a link with the inorganic world of rock and mineral, must build an underground utopia without trace of flora or fauna (axenic: free from other living organisms), completely through its own powers of artifice. A new regime of aesthetic beauty, its political strength embodied in a negative architecture voided from the solid ground, is instituted against the diminishing threat of total extinction: "It is the chief element of picturesqueness in our life; its artificial and veritably artistic scenery lends to all the masterpieces of our painters and sculptors the horizon of its perspective, the sky of its vaults, the tangled vegetation of its innumerable colonnades, whose shafts are a copy of the idealized trunk of all the antique essence of tree-life, whose capitals imitate the idealized form of all the antique flowers. Here is nature winnowed and perfected, which has become human in order to delight humanity, and which humanity has deified in order to shelter love beneath its shade."

## HISTORY, INCISION

The founders of the ancient cities understood the fatal intertwining of war, the desert, and the underground. Like Gabriel Tarde's neo-Troglodytes, they too sought to elevate an aesthetic glory against this triumvirate of forces by turning one against the other, with the Odyssean cunning required to defeat a mythic foe. They fought disappearance with visibility, the visibility of stark relief against the desert's flat extensiveness (flat and empty like an unwritten or effaced tablet). And their cities, mirrors of the constellations, stood up as a challenge to the sands, an ostentation against the compulsion to vanish. Like wild dogs seized with a catastrophic balance of rage and fear, these founders fixed themselves in a single spot and defended it, accentuating their rigidity with art.

They raised stony walls against the track of nomadic warriors charioting across the desert wastes. They sunk cisterns and cellars down into the earth below, threaded tunnels and passageways through the soil, to wait out the

siege that threatened to let the desert recover the token lands they had estranged from it. Out of this theft from the desert and the vigilance it demanded from the guilty artificers of the city, the need for writing emerged: to tally the goods stored against time and the enemy outside. And in this labor of preservation, at first no more than one further, immaterial branching of the network by which their city communicated with itself, originated the myth of history.

Writing: that gouging of marks into the flat surface of clay, a ground delimited and reduced for mastery, abstracted for the human inscript.

History: that bounding of the desert from the human preserve, the incision of its surface with the script of time, to render a one-time theft into an enduring law.

## DISENGAGE

"The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his," wrote Hugh of St. Victor. Hugh pronounced in these words the ethos of the desert, of the hermit's cave, of the underground man. He speaks of the perfection of placelessness, the holiness of disappearance to the world. Disengage: a maxim for saints.

Yet faintly, behind its syntactical seduction, that almost irresistible parallelism that hurries us forward—to nothing, to nowhere?—, I hear another voice that keeps silence: the vigil of the religious warrior. That silence echoes with the hoofs of divinely sanctioned conquest, with bloody crusades and cries where rock salt was sown in wounded furrows that once brought forth food. A cultivation of stones and a harvest of deserts against a fixed residence on earth: the thunder of holy war, that brand of exterminism practiced exclusively by the righteous.

## METALLIC MAN

When the rebel angels were cast out of heaven and order was reestablished in the firmament, the real war could at last be prepared: total mobilization of a new sort, deep within the hollows of the earth. The work of mining, of metallurgy, always had the most intricate of filiations with the nurturing of war by means of peace. Led by Mammon, the poet tells us, "Men also, and by his suggestion taught, / Ransacked the center, and with impious hands / Rifled the bowels of their Mother Earth / For treasures better hid. Soon had his crew / Opened into the hill a spacious wound, / And digged out ribs of gold." The war between the angels and the devils,

once settled in the angels' favor, was instantly transformed into a campaign against the earth itself, a rending of its crust and a ravishing of its interior, as all the powers of the engines of assault were reoriented into the smelting and forging of the mineral elements. Truce called, and the preparation of a new campaign had already begun.

Thus when human wars erupt, that sense of a radical break with peace, the commencement of something so terribly new, fresh with unprecedented dangers, is only an illusion. The war of nation against nation, of people against people, is nothing more than the extension of metallurgy by other means. Already the intensive concentration of the will and of the power of the collective necessary to extract and shape the elements of the earth is a form of virtual war. This war began long ago and has not ceased for thousands of years. Still, it takes a certain angle of vision, a chance suspension of the noise of digging, perhaps, for it to be noticed.

## BLACK GOLD

We are mistaken if we think that the new war, or any war, will be fought "for" oil. On the contrary, oil is war, the sublimed essence of war canalized into another way of consuming lives. It is a refined manifestation of violence in the form of a potential for speed, a blind destruction of resources and space, which only devolves into open conflict when its sources begin to sputter or clog. In taking over from our demonic and even our human forerunners, we latecomers have thus introduced—in spite of our slavish adherence to perennial ways—a novel element. The dissolution of fixity which the metallurgy of the past sought to found, their rude ironworks becoming our superfast engines and sleek highway machines, inaugurates a new, dissipative dimension of speed. Their gold must be made to flow perpetually, our gold must be liquid even far from the fire. We must not let it cool in the molds to forge the pillars of a pan-daemonic dictatorship of devilish valor. We unfurl sheer velocity across the desert landscape, the revolutionary banner of the democracy of speed. Into the sands our shafts are sunk to extract the black mineral substance of our might. Our temples circulate in mobile displays of unfocalized power, in the depthless design of the empty horizon, the cartographic planarity of unmarked ground. In our daily lives, we are all "road warriors," killing only for the right to keep moving deeper into the desert, the empty space with which we surround ourselves. The new war is oil itself, liquidized power, the distillate of territory. The warrior's body has disappeared in the grease of pure movement, all image and transparent windscreen: the levelling necessity of the desert.

## THIS IS NOT A TEST

Even our nuclear weaponry, with its unprecedented compression of the fusion of metals, that liquifying assault on the integrity of matter (flash: fused sand of Los Alamos) and the cinderization of the organic world—our singular, mortal world—is no exception. Not accidentally does the refinement of this technology depend on test explosions underground. This restriction to muffled subterranean disturbances is no concession to human survival, but rather a homecoming to the weapon's essential ground. Not accidentally does the perfection of deployment ramify into networks of tunnels and underground railroads, invisible burrows under the steppes and prairies drying into deserts. Not by chance is the hope for survival after the war visualized in the projected scenarios as mass flight and dwelling below ground.

The previous spectre of nuclear annihilation raining from the upper atmosphere was only a test, a ruse, a diversion from the real nuclear scene. The underground "test," brothers and sisters, was always the real thing. If this had been an actual emergency, you would have been instructed to proceed to your individual burrow. Listen to that faint boring that continues in the dreams of your hibernation, and wonder in fear how it was you were not better prepared for this moment.

## THE MOLE PEOPLE

The desert nations banded themselves together in the early nineteen-seventies to control the flow of oil; within six years nearly seventy thousand books discussing the basics of earth-sheltered houses were sold by the Underground Space Center at the University of Minnesota. A prestigious conference was held in the early eighties on "the potential of earth-sheltered and underground space." By 1981, the United States alone had already developed forty million square feet of underground space for secondary use. The number of earth-sheltered dwellings rose to nearly five thousand.

The underground represents the dream of a placeless place, both antipode and mirror of the blind exposure of the desert landscape, a release from the contingency of location and of the fluctuations of natural time. As a former president of the American Society of Civil Engineers writes, "Underground sites are not affected by windstorms, blizzards, heavy rains, extremely hot or cold periods, and the radical changes in temperature which such events can cause." Yet not just nature, but also history may be abandoned underground. Major General George J. Keegan (U.S.A.F. retired) cites the immense underground development in the limestone

foundations of Greater Kansas City as the "greatest potential civil defense facility in the United States," while a Soviet counterpart in the publication *Voyennyye Znaniya* concurs. The underground city is not only safe from the weather and the elements. It is also safe, some experts claim, from the incinerating heat and life-endangering rays of the nuclear blast.

PANORAMA

Two armies poised on the desert sands. The lines are drawn, once again remarked by the treads of motorized weapons, carriers, vehicles. One side fidgets in makeshift camps, the other hunches in trenches and bunkers, dug into the hard earth beneath the shifting surface. The oil fields resound with noise as pumps rise and fall in shafts sunk through the layers of soil and rock. Horns blare in the cities. On the highway the exhaust fumes of stopped cars shimmer in the sun. Far off, a rush of air rises from the subway grate where a raggedy man sleeps covered in old newspaper, the print obscured by nights of dampness. Rain falls over the forests of Germany, of California, of Canada, burning the needles, the slopes cut with deepening gullies. A fire rages in Brazil, smoke rises through a hole in the sky. Cattle graze the dry stubble of the plateau down to the ground. A wind is rising, battering the windows with dust. The buried silos of Kansas and Nebraska listen, quiet, waiting. A sound from far off, now closer, now far again. Who's there? No one knows, the desert calling, from the earth those ancestral voices. The war again. Another cycle drawing to its close.

# BLAISE CENDRARS

# THE PROSE OF THE TRANS-SIBERIAN AND OF LITTLE JEANNE OF FRANCE; UNNATURAL SONNETS

*(Translated from the French by Ron Padgett)*

## THE PROSE OF THE TRANS-SIBERIAN AND OF LITTLE JEANNE OF FRANCE

*Dedicated to the musicians*

Back then I was still young
I was barely sixteen but my childhood memories were gone
I was 48,000 miles away from where I was born
I was in Moscow, city of a thousand and three bell-towers and seven train stations
And the thousand and three towers and seven stations weren't enough for me
Because I was such a hot and crazy teenager
That my heart was burning like the Temple of Ephesus or like Red Square in Moscow
At sunset
And my eyes were shining down those old roads
And I was already such a bad poet
That I didn't know how to take it all the way.

The Kremlin was like an immense Tartar cake
Iced with gold
With big blanched almond cathedrals
And the honey gold of the bells. . .
An old monk was reading me the legend of Novgorod
I was thirsty
And I was deciphering cuneiform characters
Then all at once the pigeons of the Holy Ghost flew up over the square
And my hands flew up too, sounding like an albatross taking off

And, well, that's the last I remember of the last day
Of the very last trip
And of the sea.

Still, I was a really bad poet.
I didn't know how to take it all the way.
I was hungry
And all those days and all those women in all those cafés and all those glasses
I wanted to drink them down and break them
And all those windows and all those streets
And all those houses and all those lives
And all those carriage wheels raising swirls from the broken pavement
I would have liked to have rammed them into a roaring furnace
And I would have liked to have ground up all their bones
And ripped out all those tongues
And liquefied all those big bodies naked and strange under clothes that drive me mad. . .
I foresaw the coming of the big red Christ of the Russian Revolution. . .
And the sun was an ugly sore
Splitting apart like a red-hot coal.

Back then I was still quite young
I was barely sixteen but I'd already forgotten about where I was born
I was in Moscow wanting to wolf down flames
And there weren't enough of those towers and stations sparkling in my eyes
In Siberia the artillery rumbled—it was war
Hunger cold plague cholera
And the muddy waters of the Amur carrying along millions of corpses
In every station I watched the last trains leave
That's all: they weren't selling any more tickets
And the soldiers would far rather have stayed. . .
An old monk was singing me the legend of Novgorod.

Me, the bad poet who wanted to go nowhere, I could go anywhere
And of course the businessmen still had enough money
To go out and seek their fortunes.
Their train left every Friday morning.
It sounded like a lot of people were dying.
One guy took along a hundred cases of alarm clocks and cuckoo clocks from the Black Forest
Another took hat boxes, stove pipes, and an assortment of Sheffield corkscrews
Another, coffins from Malmo filled with canned goods and sardines in oil
And there were a lot of women
Women with vacant thighs for hire
Who could also serve
Coffins
They were all licensed
It sounded like a lot of people were dying out there
The women traveled at a reduced fare
And they all had bank accounts.

Now, one Friday morning it was my turn to go
It was in December
And I left too, with a traveling jewel merchant on his way to Harbin
We had two compartments on the express and 34 boxes of jewelry from Pforzheim
German junk "Made in Germany"
He had bought me some new clothes and I had lost a button getting on the train
—I remember, I remember, I've often thought about it since—
I slept on the jewels and felt great playing with the nickel-plated Browning he had given me

I was very happy and careless
It was like Cops and Robbers
We had stolen the treasure of Golconda
And we were taking it on the Trans-Siberian to hide it on the other side of the world

I had to guard it from the thieves in the Urals who had attacked
the circus caravan in Jules Verne
From the Khunghuz, the Boxers of China
And the angry little Mongols of the Great Lama
Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves
And the followers of the terrible Old Man of the Mountain
And worst of all, the most modern
The cat burglars
And the specialists of the international express.

And still, and still
I was as sad as a little boy
The rhythms of the train
What American psychiatrists call "railroad nerves"
The noise of doors voices axles screeching along frozen rails
The golden thread of my future
My Browning the piano the swearing of the card players in the
next compartment

The terrific presence of Jeanne
The man in blue glasses nervously pacing up and down the
corridor and glancing in at me
Swishing of women
And the whistle blowing
And the eternal sound of the wheels wildly rolling along ruts in
the sky
The windows frosted over
No nature!
And out there the Siberian plains the low sky the big shadows of
the Taciturns rising and falling
I'm asleep in a tartan
Plaid
Like my life
With my life keeping me no warmer than this Scotch
Shawl
And all of Europe seen through the wind-cutter of an express at
top speed
No richer than my life
My poor life

This shawl
Frayed on strong-boxes full of gold
I roll along with
Dream
And smoke
And the only flame in the universe
Is a poor thought. . . .

Tears rise from the bottom of my heart
If I think, O Love, of my mistress;
She is but a child, whom I found, so pale
And pure, in the back of a bordel.

She is but a fair child who laughs,
Is sad, doesn't smile, and never cries;
But the poet's flower, the silver lily, trembles
When she lets you see it in the depths of her eyes.

She is sweet, says nothing you can hear,
With a long, slow trembling when you draw near;
But when I come to her, from here, from there,
She takes a step and shuts her eyes—and takes a step.

For she is my love and other women
Are but big bodies of flame sheathed in gold,
My poor friend is so alone
She is stark naked, has no body—she's too poor.

She is but an innocent flower, all thin and delicate,
The poet's flower, a pathetic silver lily,
So cold, so alone, and so wilted now
That tears rise if I think of her heart.

And this night is like a hundred thousand others when a train
slips through the night
—Comets fall—
And a man and a woman, no matter how young, enjoy making
love.

The sky is like the torn tent of a rundown circus in a little fishing village
In Flanders
The sun like a smoking lamp
And way up on the trapeze a woman does a crescent moon
The clarinet the trumpet a shrill flute a beat-up drum
And here is my cradle
My cradle
It was always near the piano when my mother, like Madame Bovary, played Beethoven's sonatas
I spent my childhood in the hanging gardens of Babylon
Playing hooky, following the trains as they pulled out of the stations
Now I've made the trains follow me
Basle-Timbuctu
I've played the horses at tracks like Auteuil and Longchamps
Paris-New York
Now the trains run alongside me
Madrid-Stockholm
Lost it all at the gay pari-mutuel
Patagonia is what's left, Patagonia, which befits my immense sadness, Patagonia and a trip to the South Seas
I'm on the road
I've always been on the road
I'm on the road with little Jeanne of France
The train does a somersault and lands on all fours
The train lands on its wheels
The train always lands on all its wheels

"Blaise, say, are we really a long way from Montmartre?"

A long way, Jeanne, you've been rolling along for seven days
You're a long way from Montmartre, from the Butte that brought you up, from the Sacré-Coeur you snuggled up to
Paris has disappeared with its enormous blaze
Everything gone except cinders flying back
The rain falling
The peat bogs swelling
Siberia turning

Heavy sheets of snow piling up
And the bell of madness that jingles like a final desire in the bluish air
The train throbs at the heart of the leaden horizon
And your desolation snickers. . .

"Say, Blaise, are we really a long way from Montmartre?"

Troubles
Forget your troubles
All the cracked and leaning stations along the way
The telegraph lines they hang from
The grimacing poles that reach out to strangle them
The world stretches out elongates and snaps back like an accordion in the hands of a raging sadist
Wild locomotives fly through rips in the sky
And in the holes
The dizzying wheels the mouths the voices
And the dogs of misery that bark at our heels
The demons are unleashed
Scrap-iron
Everything clanks
Slightly off
The clickety-clack of the wheels
Lurches
Jerks
We are a storm in the skull of a deaf man. . .

"Say, Blaise, are we really a long way from Montmartre?"

Of course we are, stop bothering me, you know we are, a long way
An overheated madness bellows in the locomotive
Plague and cholera rise like burning embers around us
We disappear right into a tunnel of war
Hunger, that whore, clutches the clouds scattered across the sky and craps on the battlefield piles of stinking corpses
Do what it does, do your job. . .

"Say, Blaise, are we really a long way from Montmartre?"

Yes, we are, we are
All the scapegoats have swollen up and collapsed in this desert
Listen to the cowbells of this mangy troop
Tomsk Chelyabinsk Kansk Ob' Tayshet Verkne-Udinsk Kurgan
Samara Penza-Tulun
Death in Manchuria
Is where we get off is our last stop
This trip is terrible
Yesterday morning
Ivan Ulitch's hair turned white
And Kolia Nikolai Ivanovich has been biting his fingers for two
weeks. . .
Do what Death and Famine do, do your job
It costs one hundred sous—in Trans-Siberian that's one hundred
rubles
Fire up the seats and blush under the table
The devil is at the keyboard
His knotty fingers thrill all the women
Instinct
OK gals
Do your job
Until we get to Harbin. . .

"Say, Blaise, are we really a long way from Montmartre?"

No, hey. . . Stop bothering me. . . Leave me alone
Your pelvis sticks out
Your belly's sour and you have the clap
The only thing Paris laid in your lap
And there's a little soul. . . because you're unhappy
I feel sorry for you come here to my heart
The wheels are windmills in the land of Cockaigne
And the windmills are crutches a beggar whirls over his head
We are the amputees of space
We move on our four wounds
Our wings have been clipped
The wings of our seven sins

And the trains are all the devil's toys
Chicken coop
The modern world
Speed is of no use
The modern world
The distances are too far away
And at the end of a trip it's horrible to be a man with a
woman. . .

"Blaise, say, are we really a long way from Montmartre?"

I feel so sorry for you come here I'm going to tell you a story
Come get in my bed
Put your head on my shoulder
I'm going to tell you a story. . .

Oh come on!

It's always spring in the Fijis
You lay around
The lovers swoon in the high grass and hot syphilis drifts among
the banana trees
Come to the lost islands of the Pacific!
Names like Phoenix, the Marquesas
Borneo and Java
And Celebes shaped like a cat

We can't go to Japan
Come to Mexico!
Tulip trees flourish on the high plateaus
Clinging vines hang down like hair from the sun
It's as if the brushes and palette of a painter
Had used colors stunning as gongs—
Rousseau was there
It dazzled him forever
It's a great bird country
The bird of paradise the lyre bird
The toucan the mockingbird
And the hummingbird nests in the heart of the black lily

Come!
We'll love each other in the majestic ruins of an Aztec temple
You'll be my idol
Splashed with color childish slightly ugly and really weird
Oh come!

If you want we'll take a plane and fly over the land of the thousand lakes
The nights there are outrageously long
The sound of the engine will scare our prehistoric ancestors
I'll land
And build a hangar out of mammoth fossils
The primitive fire will rekindle our poor love
Samovar
And we'll settle down like ordinary folks near the pole
Oh come!

Jeanne Jeannette my pet my pot my poot
My me mama poopoo Peru
Peepee cuckoo
Ding ding my dong
Sweet pea sweet flea sweet bumblebee
ChickadeeBeddy-bye
Little dove my love
Little cookie-nookie
Asleep.

She's asleep
And she hasn't taken in a thing the whole way
All those faces glimpsed in the stations
All the clocks
Paris time Berlin time Saint Petersburg time all those stations' times
And at Ufa the bloody face of the cannoneer
And the absurdly luminous dial at Grodno
And the train moving forward endlessly
Every morning you set your watch ahead
The train moves forward and the sun loses time
It's no use! I hear the bells

The big bell at Notre-Dame
The sharp bell at the Louvre that rang on Saint Bartholomew's Day
The rusty carillons of Bruges-the-Dead
The electric bells of the New York Public Library
The campaniles of Venice
And the bells of Moscow ringing, the clock at Red Gate that kept time for me when I was working in an office
And my memories
The train thunders into the roundhouse
The train rolls along
A gramophone blurts out a tinny Bohemian march
And the world, like the hands of the clock in the Jewish section of Prague, turns wildly backwards.

Cast caution to the winds
Now the storm is raging
And the trains storm over tangled tracks
Infernal toys
There are trains that never meet
Others just get lost
The stationmasters play chess
Backgammon
Shoot pool
Carom shots
Parabolas
The railway system is a new geometry
Syracuse
Archimedes
And the soldiers who butchered him
And the galleys
And the warships
And the astounding engines he invented
And all that killing
Ancient history
Modern history
Vortex
Shipwreck
Even that of the *Titanic* I read about in the paper

So many associations images I can't get into my poem
Because I'm still such a really bad poet
Because the universe rushes over me
And I didn't bother to insure myself against train wreck
Because I don't know how to take it all the way
And I'm scared.

I'm scared
I don't know how to take it all the way.
Like my friend Chagall I could do a series of irrational paintings
But I didn't take notes
"Forgive my ignorance
Pardon my forgetting how to play the ancient game of Verse"
As Guillaume Appolinaire says
If you want to know anything about the war read Kuropotkin's *Memoirs*
Or, the Japanese newspapers with their ghastly illustrations
But why compile a bibliography
I give up
Bounce back into my leaping memory. . .

At Irkutsk the trip suddenly slows down
Really drags
We were the first train to wind around Lake Baikal
The locomotive was decked out with flags and lanterns
And we had left the station to the sad sound of "God Save the Czar."
If I were a painter I would splash lots of red and yellow over the end of this trip
Because I think we were all slightly crazy
And that an overwhelming delirium brought blood to the exhausted faces of my traveling companions
As we came closer to Mongolia
Which roared like a forest fire.
The train had slowed down
And in the perpetual screeching of wheels I heard
The insane sobbing and screaming
Of an eternal liturgy

I saw
I saw the silent trains the black trains returning from the Far East
and going by like phantoms
And my eyes, like tail lights, are still trailing along behind those
trains
At Talga 100,000 wounded were dying with no help coming
I went to the hospitals in Krasnoyarsk
And at Khilok we met a long convoy of soldiers gone insane
I saw in quarantine gaping sores and wounds with blood
gushing out
And the amputated limbs danced around or flew up in the raw
air
Fire was in their faces and in their hearts
Idiot fingers drumming on all the windowpanes
And under the pressure of fear an expression would burst like an
abscess
In all the stations they had set fire to all the cars
And I saw
I saw trains with 60 locomotives streaking away chased by hot
horizons and desperate crows
Disappearing
In the direction of Port Arthur.

At Chita we had a few days' rest
A five-day stop while they cleared the tracks
We stayed with Mr. Iankelevitch who wanted me to marry his
only daughter
Then it was time to go.
Now I was the one playing the piano and I had a toothache
And when I want I can see it all again those quiet rooms the
store and the eyes of the daughter who slept with me every
night
Mussorgsky
And the lieder of Hugo Wolf
And the sands of the Gobi Desert
And at Khailar a caravan of white camels
I'd swear I was drunk for over 300 miles
But I was playing the piano—it's all I saw
You should close your eyes on a trip

And sleep
I was dying to sleep
With my eyes closed I can smell what country I'm in
And I can hear what kind of train is going by
European trains are in 4/4 while the Asian ones are 5/4 or 7/4
Others go humming along are like lullabies
And there are some whose wheels' monotone reminds me of the heavy prose of Maeterlinck
I deciphered all the garbled texts of the wheels and united the scattered elements of a violent beauty
Which I possess
And which drives me

Tsitsihar and Harbin
That's as far as I go
The last station
I stepped off the train at Harbin a minute after they had set fire to the Red Cross office.

O Paris
Great warm hearth with the intersecting embers of your streets and your old houses leaning over them for warmth
Like grandmothers
And here are posters in red in green all colors like my past in a word yellow
Yellow the proud color of the novels of France
In big cities I like to rub elbows with the buses as they go by
Those of the Saint-Germain-Montmartre line that carry me to the assault of the Butte
The motors bellow like golden bulls
The cows of dusk graze on Sacré-Coeur
O Paris
Main station where desires arrive at the crossroads of restlessness
Now only the paint store has a little light on its door
The International Pullman and Great European Express Company has sent me its brochure
It's the most beautiful church in the world
I have friends who surround me like guardrails
They're afraid that when I leave I'll never come back

All the women I've ever known appear around me on the horizon
Holding out their arms and looking like sad lighthouses in the rain
Bella, Agnes, Catherine, and the mother of my son in Italy
And she, who is the mother of my love in America
Sometimes the cry of a whistle tears me apart
Over in Manchuria a belly is still heaving, as if giving birth
I wish
I wish I'd never started traveling
Tonight a great love is driving me out of my mind
And I can't help thinking about little Jeanne of France.
It's through a sad night that I've written this poem in her honor
Jeanne
The little prostitute
I'm sad so sad
I'm going to the Lapin Agile to remember my lost youth again
Have a few drinks
And come back home alone

Paris

City of the incomparable Tower the great Gibbet and the Wheel

*Paris, 1913*

## UNNATURAL SONNETS

### 1.

### OpOetic

to Jean COctO

what crimes are
not cOmmitted
in thy name!

Once upon a time there were pOets who spOke with rOund
mOuths
Round as salami her beautiful eyes and smOke
Ophelia's hair Or the lyre of Orpheus strOked
You belch up rOund hats to find a strOke-of-genius rhyme sharp
as teeth that
would nibble your lines
Open-mouthed
Since you like smOke rings why don't you repeat *smOke*
It's too easy or too hard
the 7 pawns and the Queens are there as commas
Oh POEtry
Ah! Oh!
COcOa
Since you like cowboys why don't you write *coupOke*
It's a written grOan that'll make the French crOak
The English clOwn did it with his legs
The way AretinO made love
The Mind envies the circus poster and the alphabetical pOsitions
of the Snake
Man
Where are the pOets who spOke with rOund mOuths?

nes.

We have to loosen up their b **O** z enfant

h

POETRY

*Nov. '16*

## 2.

## ACADEMIE MEDRANO

*To Conrad Moricand*

Dance with your tongue, Poet, do an entrechat
Once around the ring
on a tiny black basset hound
or old grey mare
Measure the lovely measures and fix the fixed forms
Which are the **BELLES LETTRES** you learn
Look:
**The billboards are bored** with you bite
you with their colored teeth
between your toes
The director's daughter has electric lights
The jugglers also fly through the air
pael suoregnaD
pihw eht fo kcarC
taht sserpxE
The clown is in the mixing barrel
get past the cashier
Your tongue must { on nights when
do the orchestra
No **Free Passes** are accepted.

*November 1916*

## 3.
## THE MUSICKISSME

*To Erik Satie*

What do we care about Venizelos
Only Raymond • let's put Duncan
still tucks up old Greek clothes
Music with vegetable ears
Like an elephant's
Fish cry out in the Gulf Stream
Can juicier than a fig
And the Basque voice of the sea microphone
Music hall duet
With car accompaniment
Gong
The musical seal
50 measures of do-re do-re do-re do-re do-re
do-re do-re do-re do-re do-re do-re do-re do-re
That's it!
And a dminished chord in A flat minor
ETC.!
When it's pretty a pretty toy noisemaker
dances the doorbell
Intermission
Over
*Theme:* Orchestra condutor CHARLIE CHAPLIN keeps
time
Before
The top-hatted European and his
corseted wife
*Counterpoint:* Dances
Before the bewildered European
and his wife
*Coda:* Sings
Quod erat demonstrandum

*November 1916*

## The Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of Little Jeanne of France

This poem recounts a train trip that BC claims to have taken across Russia soon after his arrival in 1904, during the Russian-Japanese War. *The Trans-Siberian* was published in 1913 in an accordion format with beautiful pochoir designs by Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979) and a variety of typefaces and indentations to indicate stanza breaks. Fully unfolded, each copy was about 6' 7" tall. The first edition of 150 copies, BC pointed out, was as tall as the Eiffel Tower. One journalist pointed out that it would be a useful book to take out to the country: "If you're caught in a sudden downpour, you could take shelter under it: it's a real portable villa." *The Trans-Siberian* was the first French book illustrated with abstract art; it was the first "simultaneous book"; and it might well qualify as the first book *as art object.* To get an idea of what it looks like in color, see Arthur A. Cohen's *Sonia Delaunay* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1975) or S.A. Buckberrough's *Sonia Delaunay: A Retrospective* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Albright-Knox Gallery, 1980).

*The Temple at Ephesus:* The Artemision, the grandest version of several temples dedicated to the goddess Artemis, at Ephesus, an ancient Ionian city on the west coast of Asia Minor. The temple is said to have been burned to the ground by an arsonist named Herostratus in 356 B.C., on the evening when Alexander the Great was born. The site of the Artemision was first excavated in 1863-74; further discoveries were made when work resumed in 1904, when BC was in Russia.

*Novgorod:* Novgorod (now Gorky) was one of the most important medieval Russian cities, the capital of the principality of Novgorod. According to BC, his first published literary work was called *The Legend of Novgorod* (1909). It is supposed to have appeared in an edition of 14 copies in Russian translation, but none survives, and the manuscript has never been found. There are some interesting tales and legends associated with Novgorod, but none that I know of called "The Legend of Novgorod."

*I foresaw the coming. . .of the Russian Revolution:* The young BC was in St. Petersburg on Red Sunday, the beginning of the Revolution of 1905.

*Amur:* River in eastern Asia that forms the boundary between Manchuria and Russia.

*Malmo:* This seaport was, at the turn of the century, second only to Stockholm in Swedish industry.

*Traveling jewel merchant:* A Varsovian merchant named Rogovine who took the 17-year-old BC under his wing in 1904. They traveled thousands of miles across Russia and China, dealing in antiques, jewels, spices, cuckoo clocks, and rugs.

*Harbin:* Town in Manchuria that became an important military town during the Russian-Japanese War because it served as a junction on the Trans-Manchurian railway (the part of the Trans-Siberian that crossed Manchuria) with the line leading to Port Arthur.

*Golconda:* A fortress and ruined city in India that lent its name to the diamonds found in the dominions of the Kutb Shahi dynasty, founded in 1512 and which ruled a large and powerful kingdom, with Golconda as its capital and treasury.

*Khunkhuz:* In his book *Siberia* (1943), Emil Lengyel says, "The. . .Khunkhuz brigands. . .[of Manchuria] took a perverse pleasure in destroying the [railroad] line for no apparent reason whatever."

*Boxers:* Members of an intensely patriotic organization, the Righteous Harmony Fists (popularized by journalists as "Boxers") retaliated against foreigners and Christians in China in 1900.

*"Railroad nerves":* In a 1930 letter to John Dos Passos, BC explained this is a technical term used by American psychiatrists to describe "a softening of the spinal marrow due to the trepidations of modern life or some such nonsense." He hazarded "rail-road brain" as a translation.

*Taciturns:* Apparently Siberian hills or mountains.

*Patagonia:* An area in South America lying partly in Chile, partly in Argentina, it was discovered in 1520 by Magellan and named Tierra del Patagones because of the large footprints of the natives, whose average height was around six feet two inches. Hence, "Patagonia, which befits my immense sadness."

*I'm on the road with little Jeanne of France:* All we know of Jeanne is in this poem.

*Tomsk Chelyabinsk Kansk etc.:* Russian towns, most of which are on the Trans-Siberian line.

*Cockaigne:* The Land of Cockaigne, an imaginary country, a medieval utopia where life was a continual round of luxurious idleness. In literature, Cockaigne is sometimes used as a euphemism for London or Paris—"the big city."

*Rousseau:* The French painter Henri Rousseau (1844-1910) allowed his artist and poet friends to believe that he had been to Mexico. Guillaume Apollinaire (see note below), whose brother worked in a bank in Mexico, was an enthusiastic perpetuator of this legend.

*Land of the thousand lakes:* Perhaps Norway?

*Ufa:* Russian town.

*Grodno:* Russian town.

*Bruges-the-Dead:* Bruges is the capital of West Flanders, Belgium. The belfry of the market hall dates from the end of the 13th century. The chimes are famous.

*Syracuse:* Ancient Sicilian town, the birthplace of Archimedes.

*Archimedes* (ca. 287-212 B.C.): Greek mathematician and inventor, famous for inventing various mechanical devices, some of which were used as weapons. His most important discoveries were in physics and mathematics. He was killed by a Roman soldier while drawing mathematical figures in the sand, although orders had been given that he be spared.

*Chagall:* Marc Chagall (1887–1985), Russian-born painter who was virtually discovered by BC.

*Guillaume Apollinaire* (1880-1918): French poet and friend of BC. Like Cendrars, he was a foreign national who became a naturalized French citizen and changed his name. See also BC's poems "Hammock" and "Homage to Guillaume Apollinaire."

*Kuropotkin:* Probably Alexei Nikolaievich Kuropotkin (1848-1925), commander of the Russian army in the Russian-Japanese War of 1904–5, although BC could also have had in the back of his mind Piotr Kropotkin, the anarchist, who explored Siberia in the 19th century. Both men wrote memoirs.

*Irkutsk:* A town on the Trans-Siberian line, on Lake Baikal.

*Lake Baikal:* An enormous Siberian lake (over 400 miles long), surrounded by mountains and filled with salt water and salt-water marine life—2,000 miles from the nearest salt water. Because building the railroad line entailed various difficulties, the work was interrupted on one side of Lake Baikal and continued on the other, so that this stretch remained the final one, at last completed in 1905.

*Krasnoyarsk:* A town on the Trans-Siberian line.

*Khilok:* A town on the Trans-Siberian line.

*Port Arthur:* An ice-free port on the southern tip of the Liao-Tang Peninsula in China, Port Arthur was thus the hope of an expanding, imperialist Russia at the turn of the century.

*Chita:* A town on the Trans-Siberian line.

*Maeterlinck:* Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), Belgian-born French poet and dramatist.

*Tsitsihar:* A town on the Trans-Manchurian line.

*Yellow the proud color:* A big series of novels from the French publisher Albin Michel had yellow covers.

*Lapin Agile:* A rustic cabaret in Montmartre frequented before World War I. It was so named because it displayed a large painting of a rabbit, apparently dancing, by an artist named A. Gill.

*The great Gibbet:* Perhaps BC's nickname for the Eiffel Tower; in "Tower" he says, "I'd like to [...] hang from the Eiffel Tower." It could also be a reference to the Paris of François Villon.

*The Wheel:* The Ferris wheel erected, like the Eiffel Tower, for the Universal Exposition of 1889. The Universal Exposition of 1900 had a Trans-Siberian Railway pavilion that simulated a train trip across Russia.

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**Unnatural Sonnets**

"OpOetic" was first published in the program notes of a poetry and music presentation, Paris, 1917. It was reprinted, with the two others in this group, in *L'Oeuf dur* no. 14, Paris, 1923.

**OpOetic**

*Jean COctO:* Jean Cocteau (1889-1963), French writer, artist, and filmmaker. BC, as director of the publishing house Editions de la Sirène, consulted with and published Cocteau.

*What crimes. . . :* A paraphrase of Mme. Roland's last words before her death (1793) on the guillotine: "O liberty! O liberty! What crimes are committed in thy name!"

*Aretino:* Pietro Aretino (1492-1556), Italian author of licentious works.

*Ozenfant:* A pun on the French word ***enfant*** (child) and Amédée Ozenfant (1886-1966), French painter and theoretician who edited *L'Elan* magazine (1915-1916), which published typographically daring poems.

**Académie Médrano**

That is, the Cirque Médrano, located at the corner of the Rue des Martyrs and the Boulevard de Rochechouart in Paris. On Sundays and holidays a circus was held there, with equestrian performances, acrobatics, pantomimes, etc.

*Conrad Moricand:* Swiss-born French writer and astrologer (ca. 1885-ca. 1951); later a friend of Henry Miller.

**The Musickissme**

On one handwritten manuscript, the title is broken into "The Music Kiss Me."

*Erik Satie:* French composer (1886-1925) and friend of BC.

*Venizelos:* Eleutherios Venizelos (1864-1936), Greek statesman. President of the Council (1910-1915, 1917-1920, and 1928).

*Raymond Duncan:* Brother of Isidora Duncan, he wore ancient-style Greek sandals and robes in the streets of Paris right up to his death in 1966.

*Charlie Chaplin:* BC claimed that in London he had once shared a room with the then unknown Chaplin. He later realized that he had confused him with a long-lost friend named Perlberg.

*Quod erat demonstrandum:* In Euclidean geometry, the expression (Q.E.D.) which comes at the end of a proof and which means "Which was to be shown."

# KAREN KELLEY
# TWO PROSE WORKS

## Blanche (Virtual Reality No. 2)

It is first dark of an even worse condition acquired despite your best efforts mixed with **RIOTOUS DISORDER**. The grim fixture of sky that shows around the diminishing white building is a ripe, formal fringe, almost a fresh start, which invests the scene with a kind of **THICK, SOFT QUALITY** and gracefully dissolves the ashes streaking the night. If this sky is removed, **EVERYTHING WILL GO WRONG**. You come around the corner, carrying a large suitcase. You look like the space for a ship between two piers by moonlight, then like a **MILK-PAIL**, then again a port and again a bucket. You think you have **DISCOVERED SOMETHING IMPORTANT HERE**, but are told that this is deliberate. The strange idea that a patch of **SHOCKING MISPERCEPTION** "will never grow anymore once it is looked at" has been held—mistakenly—throughout generations. You can almost feel the **DANGEROUS BREATH OF THE RIVER WEEPING, WEEPING**, crow feathers dotting its bank, faint smell of bananas and coffee. Two women, one white and one black, are seizing with their hands **AIRPLANES, HELICOPTERS, GLIDERS, AND DIRIGIBLES** from the sky. The white woman fills the upper part of the building; the black woman has a white smock that shines like a **NEW MOON** when she holds up a black silk kerchief between herself and the audience. Your appearance is incongruous to this setting. You are bad luck in the clothes you've worn all your life—**LONG EARRINGS OF CHILDHOOD** surrounded by brilliants, white gloves and hat—looking as if you are testing the fiber of the longest night of the year (if hard a man, soft a woman) by naming it "stranger." **YOU ARE ABOUT FIVE YEARS OLDER THAN A STAR**, your crumbling baked clay beauty an obligation that must come to an end based on **DRASTIC LIGHT** equalling cigarettes and typeface with relatively thin, light lines. There is something about your **UNCHARTED SPEECH**, as well as your fusty wedding gown, that suggests **LOOSE IRON FALLING FROM THE FEET OF GRAZING HORSES**. Suddenly you know that you were formerly used in superstitious and diabolical operations, performing **ACROBATIC STUNTS** for some reason in a half-slip. This mirror equals motherhood, sex,

madness, death. You spring up and seek your chances, seek your choices, by praying cross-legged in the small, private room. **THE INNER LANDSCAPE FADES TO DARKNESS** and the outside wall of the house disappears. Two rooms can be seen, **NOT TOO CLEARLY DEFINED**. The one first entered is primarily the direction from which the wind is about to blow, but contains a folding bed **TO BE USED BY YOU**. Laughter and shouts of parting come from men. One throws a shadow over your script where it reads: *screen door of the and comes in.* He is an inner core of certain, well-deserved reward, a human body covered with a **COW HIDE**, on which the words *Animal Joy* are painted in red in broad brush-strokes. The room beyond this is an abandoned hive. Inside, **A VERY SMALL, DETAILED YOU** sits in a chair stiffly with its shoulders slightly hunched and its legs pressed close together and its hands tightly clutching its purse as if it is **QUITE COLD**. After a while the fucked-blind look goes out of its eyes and you begin to see that the essential basis of strong feeling in the body involves **LOOKING BACK**. Pillar of salt. A tire screeches. You **CATCH YOURSELF** with a startled gesture.

". . . I think I see **LITERAL PASSION**, and though it is **INSIGNIFICANT**, it is full of meaning for me"
(Virtual Reality No. 3)

You are awakened early in the morning by someone **BURNING A CLEARING** in your mouth. It is the enthusiastic looming wolf whose face makes you think that all kinds of "normal" expectations are narrow, selfish journeys. . .and you must admit it is **NOT ONLY ITS MIND WHICH YOU ARE AWARE OF, IN AWE OF, CHAOTICALLY**. The rare stone (as in pit) of the moment you do not separate so easily from is also standing beside your table, and both stare at you with no less interest than you showed in them during the night. **A CONTINUOUS LOW DRONING SOUND** considered characteristic of manhood. In responss to this, he first unbuttons his jacket to show the twisting and turning in pain you lie awake all night **TRANSMITTING AND RECEIVING IMAGES OF**, which explains the loose fit of his collar. He has, like you, **A SENSE OF SMELL**. It amuses him, the way your hands change according to the shape of fight or flee. But his father-eye refuses to come to life. You see a mouth that is **GRATIFICATION OF EVERY WISH**. After this degree of visibility, which consists of two jaws

closing and opening to express **A CAPACITY FOR YOU**, his teeth begin to sprout. You understand his staying the night as the relation of a result to its cause. No matter how much his expression is modified by **SHIFTING THE CANDLE AROUND** in the outer space determined with reference to the boundaries of your body, his thick, horizontal moustache **DOES NOT LOOK IN THE LEAST REAL**. Your mother, however, comes out better. You love the red marks on the back of that clot of soot she calls a **SOUL**, which turns into a leather pillow or the hat only females wear. It seems to you that **ANYONE WHO SEES THIS IMAGE** must be so forcibly struck that they would begin immediately to think of **EXAGGERATED, INCOHERENT INTERPRETATIONS** inasmuch as every noise indistinctly perceived makes our bedclothes fall off in the night. Her mother-hand drops from the arm of the chair in the foreground, the **OPENING OF HER DRESS** shows her breasts, and you want to kiss her there. She says she wants nothing from you but the diffuse fragrance emitted when you come about to windward, your **HABITUALLY BLOOD-STAINED HANDKERCHIEF**, and the sign from your room that reads: *leave the room immediately after ejaculation or face military punishment.* First you make her go to the ladies' room. You part your lips and pull out a pair of stockings. She has a **RABBIT HOLE**, hidden but ready to be used. Yours is the life for which she has sacrificed the sense of touch. You incite yourself to stick your nose in her, to dig. The tunnel suffocates you, despite its being a **GRASSY REGION WHERE STREAMS DISCHARGE AND LOUD CRIES FLARE UP INTO THE SKY**. There are so many things you want to do with her. Instead you wonder: *Have I frightened her? Can there be someone more sensitive and more afraid than I?* Mountains of **UNDERTONES, OVERTONES, NUANCES AND ABSTRACTIONS** sunder, an other mounting your back. It is the wolf. Of course you want the pleasure. Instead, they both get down and introduce themselves properly, with a certain formality, as three-dimensional representations of those **EXTREME SELF-PERCEPTIONS** that are injurious to your own purposes. Their laterally compressed striped bodies angle through the **BLINDSPOTS** in the room. You tiger-pace the hotbed of sound and meaning, letters and symbols, **UNABLE TO REMEMBER OR CALL THEM TO MIND**: they are unconscious.

# BRUCE ANDREWS
# WHO SHOUTED?

## ONE

My got
Up out of WHO SHOUTED?
Nowhere, is there clapping for themselves?
Voice, if they could see it
What *is* dark—
Its saying, its announcement
Sure, the last Original People at Great Water "that are
young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long"
Waking dream all conversation
Set the scene, defend your client
Set in order, I'm saying, count, I'm. . .
Together Future
Anticipates (contrived)—double-hearted?
Don't make the lies any better
As a skeleton, just animated pottery
Name sliced through the neck
Reassemble the name
Of the lips of your mouth
Uhuh. . .
If you put fireflies at the tip
Clouded mirror—Writing
Black seeds in a white soil

## TWO

You're HARVESTING
Formal parting: *Be careful what you see*
So that you read it, wake up into a
Or mirrors reversal—dreams kind of lie
Eyes unperforated
Anything is foreseeable—
I memorize anything in the future
Traces at NIGHT WRITING
Tease stage tricks out
Mostly bad
So that tells you what not to
Gossip enough, bad news 'takes shame' & backs off
The AS IF—& the UNLESS

## THREE

Who prefers the answers?
Quote, unquote
No either/or, no imperatives
Verb—Object—Subject
Your no imposing yourself on some one on some other
No WHY
The condition of being red corresponds to me
Verb's possessed, in itself powerless
Relative location
At least they're not just direct objects
The future the hypothetical
Who owns what?

## 4.

I dreamed of staring eyes
Foretells an encounter with an animal
Something slow
Something fast
Dream of honey from termites
Pleasant visitors will come
Lying down
You'll have much work
What's known
Will be a doubt
Carry a heavy load
Slandered

## FOUR

Approve my
So you have come
Not verb *against*
Rubbing her back against his, like a cat
Everything's so tattooed
So they could file teeth to points
Mirrors, cross-eyed, flattened foreheads
Just agents, not makers—
We're mouthed we're faced
Poised
Close the path, chisel the drooling at the mouth
She or he knows (what she or he's doing)
Little human heads on a belt
The twisted ones *versus* scatter blessings to
Possessive is the having to do
Rub red pepper into the normative

Emphasize the horizontal
Hunt in the morning, farm in the afternoon
In the evening work about your dreams & the stars

## 5.

Dream of chocolate
        Foaming at the mouth
Birds, Tomato, Dust, Dog's claws
        Illness
Colors, anything I blow
        A bad omen
Lizards, Turkey, Pigeon, Buzzard, Eagle, Vampire bat
        Fever
I dreamed of trapped animals, & whipping someone
        Stomach pains
Custard apple
        Skin erupts
Woodpecker
        Coughs blood
Cotton, fruits
        Anemia
Salt
        Catch a cold
Hit someone, beat someone, scorpion sting
        Rheumatism
Alligators
        Malaria
Vultures
        Toothache
Whistle, Thunder, Trumpets, Waves, Fountain, Smoke, Clouds,
    Naked
Or you have wings, a person's anus, Tortoise, Genitals, Shit
        About to die: warning

Stars, Frog, Gopher, Pincers
Funeral
Singing, Music, Poetry, Dancing
Tears or Mourning
Losing my wisdom teeth
Children's death
Planting beans
Killing maggots one by one
Full Moon
In childbirth

## FIVE

What happened will happen again
Tips of the teeth at the earth's heart
Which is on the back of a crocodile
The Big Mappers Big Stagers Big Designers
Not WHAT but HOW
Order, or how much 'bright praise'?
Local trance decorum tobacco
Forced to cut wood all day long & make love
Federal body politic medicine
Until she eats & cooks you whole
My decentralized in your
Bend down face in your
Are what moves, invisible
You see a shadow going the wrong way
Teeth paper vice
Laws are never quiet (making credibility)
Piece out & deck out
Supplemental counterfeit funding—
Or the Wooden People getting cashiered
Couldn't kneel: too stiff
Or speak from their hearts: had none

Revenge attack by their own dogs, turkeys, pots & pans
Cunning jugglers
To see what was coming, a change of clothes
What orientation
Participant observer?—give-me-a-break!
Draws blood from incense tongue
Trophy decapitated imitation hearts
Moulded out of incense fish in hand like heart
To buy food from the
Disassembled, it disappears
Like a Do-It-Yourself kit
No hallucinogenic enemas
Morning glories, water-lilies, sleigh-bells
Hedgehog of arrows in the blue chest

## 6.

I dreamed of hunting
You'll be courting
Of a canoe
Sex
A woman's thigh
Cutting red meat
Game escapes
Spurned
Dark night
Hot weather
Ants biting me
Caught in the rain
A camera, a guitar, a virgin
You'll see game
An effeminate man
A very tame animal

Cutting off a finger
    Monkeys
Monkeys
    Testicles
Blanket
    Intestines
Candles
    Fat
Money
    Ticks

## SIX

Corn center
Fat stubby cigars
Not killing vultures—
Long ago they were our grandmothers
The roots of everything
Make one knot, one bow
400 square feet each
Eating away of the planets, by ants: *eclipse*
Make root of us?—corn didn't?
One mahogany falls & the sky drops a star
Hiding from danger: as a sweet potato
Humor them—
Hang up their yellow jawbones & antlers & wings
We *are* eating red. . .when there is ammunition
Barkless dog—
I have need—
Club Mace Spear Sword Poison-dart Sling Hatchet
Rope Net Lasso Spear-thrower
Or blowpipe down a bird
Lucky days on the stingless verb bees

## 7.

Obscenity
Game runs away
Large snakes coiled up
Tourists all over the place
Floodwaters, Anteaters, Squirrels, Skunks, Sugar, Aim at the thorax of the jaguar
Foreigners
Something sticky
Will shake your hand
Injected in the eye socket, Needles, Blackberry, Underpants
Snake fangs
Rope with its end frayed
Snake with its mouth open
Penis, Person Reading, Tobacco, String, Waves on a lake, Combing hair, Urinating, Writing
Watch out for snakebite
To unravel
Killing a snake
Gorgeous sunset
End of the world

## SEVEN

And the fire at the ends of their hands
Becoming 'separate ones'
Who curls up inside their own blowguns?
Too many white men
It will burn everything until the world is naked
Barkers of shins =
Prostitutes
The snakes
Would have all things put in their mouths

Wives made entirely of money
Evangelis[hi]ts, the twisted ones
Like the Wooden Men—have the radios
*Pulling in* stations as distant as your heart among us
We were reduced
But I do not change
Licensing the destroyers—
The world wants to die—
So they can begin fresh
Moebius of *what sows, what dawns*
So instead of snakes looking at you
You are looking at them

## NOTE

The preceding is the text to a dance choreographed by Sally Silvers, premiered in New York at Performance Space 122 in May & June 1989, performed by Silvers, Pilar Alamo, Barbara Chang, Julian Jackson, and Mari Martin. Sixteen minutes long. The text—concerning the daily life, ancestry, and dream imagery of the Lacandon Maya (with some material culled from Robert Bruce's *Lacandon Dream Symbolism* on their collective use of dream as prophecy & warning) was designed to be presented on tape by two different alternating & overlapping voices. In addition to these two tracks, Andrews' live sound for the performance intermixes edited tracks of Mexican music from Chiapas & of shortwave radio transmissions. The lighting design divides the space into five differently lit areas, corresponding to Mayan color symbolism. The dancers' costumes are white paper jumpsuits with crinkly bright-colored paper waistbands.

Movement for the piece was selected from Silvers' videotaped improvised solo material, created while under the influence of (or intoxicated by) Classic Mayan writing & images. For example: dancers in profile, movements low to the ground, contorted or impossible-to-hold shapes & balances. The organization of the movement—both spatially & directionally—is based on Mayan conceptions of time & space. (For instance, the four cardinal directions of the universe each supported by a different rain god & the world tree which connects current time to the 'other world' represents a fifth direction.) The four directions are assigned a colored space: east—red, north—white, west—black, south—yellow; and the action of the dance (like Time itself) moves in a counterclockwise direction within these colors.

The dance is divided into five sections, each associated with a different dancer as foregrounded soloist counterpointing the quartet.

1.—Begins in darkness, with music. ("I dream of. . .") The center is a slowly & imperceptibly descending headstand with crossed legs. The other four are balanced face down on their elbows and rocking back & forth dragging their feet & heads. Corners trade places and all five face front & sit down, to begin alternating in & out of the same phrase.

2.—Soloist action: snakelike, with large jumps & dives, through the others who form a

triangular shape doing repetitive profile walking shapes in canon. (Text doubling, two simultaneous voices—)

3.—Travelling glyph positions. (Words intermittently drowned out by music—marimbas, chanting.) Gradually forming into an ominous frightening creature—a shaking, self-slapping standing line-up.

4.—Stark & ritualistic: soloist walks on bodies at perimeter. Word overlappings. Somber, processional music ("decentralized," "what orientation"). Horizontal lifts; soloist lifted up, walks in air upside down & sideways ("drops a star"). Decays into ground-level chaos (scrambling balances, bumping into each other, frantic searches). Shortwave radio & faster primitive horn sounds.

5.—Soloist back to center. More extreme unison shapes & balances. Fife & drums. Formalized, prophetic, somber. ("The world wants to die".) Ending with crashing from a headstand onto back with rocking, embracing motion. "So instead of. . .," music & shortwave sounds & lights out.

[S.S. & B.A.]

# LARRY GOODELL
# FOUR SONNETS

## GEMINI IN THE FOREST

"Language is spoken sound" as we mish-mash together
In the deep dark pandering forest we are on the crotch of the whore
Nature is the prince, the princess king, the Queen the precise bitch
The everything we adore—my alter-ego and I, my other self
My imagining travelling partner, my itching companion
The Dante Troubadours are singing in the kitchen, kitchen of the forest
I am discovering myself here interfering in all art
That comes my way, the devouring of everything in its path
The packing away every crumb in ant caverns below
The eating away of every log from the heart within
The misadventure of hope and absurdity of human depression:
I'm just in the way—unless I drop dead
My wordiness, my sounding out my name, Larry, scares everything way,
As if I or my other truer self existed.

## NEW MEXICO STYLE

Oh Sky that is my bosom, Flower that is my defect,
How the Southwest lifts me to enchantment,
Enchantment of moron over dolt, enrapture of the mesa
Catty-corner across from McDonald's in Bernalillo.
My high-flying boots straddle that bohemian cactus there
And it's pleasure! Only a woman would know.
My river goddess Alpha Romero speeds down the Interstate:
These stones are my inner tones, and Nature marches on.
Coyote is a woman, woman is a muchacha grown up to señora,
The sky is full of rainbows over the Chile Harbor
Where the Rio Grande meets the infinite, the infinite turquoise drama.
My grandmother showed me everything I know back in Brooklyn
"Come to New Mexico, they'll love you there—there're
More of us there than the natives, and we populate and shit in style."

## MAKING IT BIG

*for Dagoberto Gilb*

It's alright to switch subjects midstream, if you don't lose your focus.
You can come back and finish it later, that's considerate
If you're telling a story. Everything I've written is a guideline to myself on
How to create art. Art for masses of asses, millions of jillions:
The entire universe with all its galaxies flows—
Why not go to the top, is that only reserved for presidents of this and that?

Go ahead hold out and get published by Random House, Harper and Row.
You deserve to be paid for your work and not have to nickel-dime it all the way.
Most people, when they are informed, will like you.
Most people are not asses, I hope I'm not one, there is hope.
But there are millions of us out there in the universe
And we only have this planet to play with, though the Weird Eyed
May come and visit us soon. Go to the top, you're right.
They'll be knocking down the doors from Mars & beyond, wanting to read your book.

## ATTRACTION

If your Attraction is bi-fed, post-nutrient one-one-one
It will be a diversion that might get you into Sexaholics Anonymous,
Or if it transcends Suzy, Ephraim, Skullduggery prosthetics
It will draw Doctors to you, Man & Wife, Life Suppositories
Expository righting, what was wrong. Be a moralist.
Stand up for your attraction. Be magnetic. Hold your own.
You are the desire of your making, the extreme cream job.
Going home ***au natural*** will get you bliss, Fort Bliss.
The entire military establishment stands at your door,
Watching television till you bomb them with your condom bomb.
Oh come to me long, my Attraction, duo-concertante in the nude
Thrill will thrill, Safe will be safe, lately rife
Everybody is crawling up out of themselves, to be
Themselves, attracted to attraction, safe in perfect energy of themselves.

PAMELA WYE

# THIS, THIS, THIS BODY: THE SCULPTURE OF PETAH COYNE

In an art world that has downplayed imagination to the point of near shut-off, Petah Coyne's recent sculpture has helped flick the switch of the "i word" not merely back On, but Fast-Forward. Despite its abstractness, Coyne's sculpture is highly suggestible, provisionally accepting the swarm of our own projections only to ricochet them back at us in a surcharge of recollections we may have forgotten we ever knew. To say that Coyne's sculpture gladly supports conflicting interpretations is an understatement.

While her 1987 mud and straw installation at the Sculpture Center bristles with the gothic anxiety and enchantment of a brothers Grimm tale of witches and brooms and thatched roofs, her installation of the same year at the Whitney Museum-Equitable Center evokes the violent pagan rituals of blood and gore that underlie Catholicism.

In "natural-looking" works, Coyne toys with the absurdity of an operating method (and perhaps a whole cultural mind set) that deconstructs nature—literally gathering, chopping, sorting, packing and shipping raw materials from far and not-so-far-off places—in order to reconstruct over-sized baroque simulations by unnatural means: hollow armatures, barbed wire, cloth, paint, glue, celluclay, tar, polymer, rope and nuts and bolts.

Coyne speaks of Van Gogh as a major influence. The twisted trees, bushes and wheat sheaves of Van Gogh's Arles drawings, in particular, do indeed echo through Coyne's work. The visual texture of Coyne's bundles of straw and dry branches is kin to the obsessively repetitive brown-ink line of Van Gogh's drawings. In sculptures as diverse as her "mutant" Florida tree, her visceral hanging bushes and her Sculpture Center "landscape," Coyne pushes the latent creatures lurking in Van Gogh's tortured flora toward greater literalness and specificity without losing the dominant abstractness of her work.

Van Gogh's Arles drawings also recall the more recent (1940s to the present) ink drawings of another Coyne precursor—the sculptor Louise Bourgeois. Though much has been made of the relation of Coyne's sculpture to that of the late Eva Hesse, it is the intense fertility of Bourgeois's more pronouncedly symbolic imagination—undulating landscapes, bulbous tree-like figures, pendulous pouches, skeined, skirted, totemic,

pregnant and multibreasted abstract she-forms—that most resembles Coyne's own fever of forms. And Bourgeois's ceiling-hung, plaster hives of the 1960s are, formally and emotionally, the most direct antecedent to Coyne's larger-scaled hanging sculptures of the 1980s.

Coyne's outdoor work on Staten Island in 1986, with its torso-like sheaves of roots, twigs and mud, and her Sculpture Center environment, with its look of some imaginary natural history museum's re-creation of an equally imaginary primitive society's ritual site, employ a conceptual primitivism characteristic of first-generation earth-work artists, particularly Robert Smithson, whose work evinces lost societies and the world's entropic fate. Coyne's later works, sculptural figures from 1988-9, function together in spatial dialogues rather than as all-out environments and hark back to the formalist primitivism of Miro by way of Ashile Gorky. The feminist primitivism of the 1970s also resonates in Coyne's use and elaboration of the iconography of blood, hair and organs that characterized the emergence of that important movement. Finally, and perhaps more fundamentally, there is a gesture of ritualized deconstruction underlying all of Coyne's work. It is one that does not mirror modern technology by clinically and cleanly dissecting, but rather one that reverberates with the atavistic impulse of rending limb by limb, before setting about the job of making whole again.

Whether one reads the individual forms of the Equitable installation as secretions that have dripped from some giant gland down through the ceiling, hardening into place over time, or as limbs, viscera and sexual organs hung slaughter-house style like trophies from some ancient battle, Coyne's imagery relates to the body—both inside and out. Even her Florida tree, in sprouting giant pouches like outsized follicles, refers us back to the body. A bouquet of gargantuan Fallopian tubes, perhaps? But, on the other hand, nothing prevents one, in a more whimsical moment, from seeing this tree as a weeping willow laden with the backyard swings of a surreal childhood, or imagining some out-of-state tourist marveling at the strange local vegetation.

The strict Catholicism of her childhood, Coyne has said, continues to preoccupy her and feed her art. It is no wonder. Catholicism is fixated on the body. Not simply our bodies and the prohibitions thereon, but His body. "Eat this, for this is my body. . ." Coyne's art connects with those forgotten pagan beliefs and rituals that underlie Catholicism—sacrificial dismemberment and cannibalism as well as methods of preserving the body for its passage into the afterlife.

In the ancient Egyptian Osirian myth, the man-god Osiris is killed, torn into fourteen pieces and buried across Egypt. Isis searched for and succeeded in reconstructing Osiris's broken body (except for his phallus which had been swallowed by a fish in the Nile), then embalmed and

swathed it before breathing her own life into him. This regenerative myth ushered in the agricultural age—Osiris was the grain and his death and resurrection was the grain's burial and rebirth as cereal. In a prototypical Eucharist that harks back to earlier cannibalistic traditions, sacred Egyptian bread was consumed as a means of absorbing Osiris's body and his eternal life.

In Greece, where Osiris was known as Dionysus, Dionysiac ritual assured immortality through the rending and eating of a divine substitute (bovine or human) in a re-enactment of Osiris's dismemberment. One account has Dionysiacs (all women) tearing calves asunder and flinging the mangled remnants among the trees; another has them ripping a man's arm out of his shoulder before tearing him to pieces.

Like the site of an Osirian mystery-festival or Dionysiac rampage, Coyne's Equitable installation was strewn with shapes like dismembered body parts. Lumpy testicles and rent hearts, intestines draped in wiry brambles of veins and nerves, shoulder joints and the back of an ox hung impaled on branches that poked down through the ceiling. Brown like dried blood, wrapped in straw and rope, these body-parts appeared as though preserved in their forlornness for some future attempt at wholeness, like an archaic donor organ bank.

In an Isis-like impulse, Coyne assembled and reconstructed her mutilated shapes to create figures of a many-faceted wholeness for her 1989 exhibit at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York. As though disemboweled, these sculptures are built around hollow wire armatures, so the air, in a purifying gesture, passes easily through them. The large size of these sculptures belies their fragility just as their earthiness belies their desire to levitate or at least defy gravity by hovering above the ground. They look like bodies, but they act like souls. Coyne bandaged these delicate "bodies" with strips of cotton fabric like Giotto's swathed figure of the resurrected Lazarus. With limbs hidden beneath the winding cloth, the disinterred body of Lazarus resembles an unearthed tuberous root or a Petah Coyne sculpture. Coyne applied oil and grease to her disembodied bodies in a gesture not unlike the ancient Egyptian mortuary custom of applying sacred ointments to the dead to preserve and protect them on their journey into the afterlife. The Catholic sacrament of Anointing the Sick is a derivative of this ritual. Coyne also dusts some parts with talc or orchid fiber, substances that are suggestive of the spices Mary Magdalene brought to Jesus's tomb to bless his body. Coyne's powders change character over time—the oil and grease beneath the talc slowly "eats" it, turning it black, while the deep red orchid fiber turns brown on its own. The rest of the sculptures' surfaces are sprayed with a black sand that is a by-product of sandcasting. This gives them a sooty, industrial quality that is in contrast to the earlier work's hairy naturalness.

Coyne refers to her sculptures as "she." And it is in her work of 1989, both the Shainman exhibit and the Brooklyn Museum installation, that this feminine appearance is most explicit. The she-forms at Shainman are smaller than their sisters at the Brooklyn Museum. The wire buzzing around their tops and bottoms is finer, resulting in a more immaterial-looking haze like a spell, a perfume or some other esoteric emanation. The fertility and multiplicity of forms within a single figure is held in urbane balance, like still mobiles, giving these sculptures a more elegant demeanor than their earlier country cousins and their giant Brooklyn sisters. The strange ovate fruit that decorates these she-figures like hats or skirts are like ovum that don't want to leave the mother body to strike out on their own as independent figures but rather stay close to home, growing so big in some instances that they read as partners. These intricate sculptures have a lacy loveliness about them that is more visual than tactile, more cerebral than animal.

The three massive and domineering sculptures that hung in a face-off with the public in the Grand Lobby of the Brooklyn Museum had the regal bearing of great goddesses. Simultaneously off-putting and reassuring, they have beneath their surface a snarled mass of shapes, a tangled conglomeration of debris from some forgotten culture that got thrown together in some cataclysmic inundation that obliterated the minutiae of their individual shapes and made of them a body. Covered in a hardened gritty silt, they hang like inadvertent monuments to some bygone age (perhaps our own).

Or are these three sisters really the three successive and reductive states of one single she-form? The largest, draped in a multibreasted gown, is the most whole and imperturbable. The middle one has been stripped (The Bride Stripped Bare?) to reveal her lumpy body, and is tormented by orbiting flies (or are those spinning wires the fizzing gases of a decaying body?). The smallest of these sister sculptures has been eaten down to her most vital organ. Her gaping nest-like womb cradles a vessel of industrial oil like the lady earth who holds, deep within her belly, that coveted modern-day treasure of prehistoric decay.

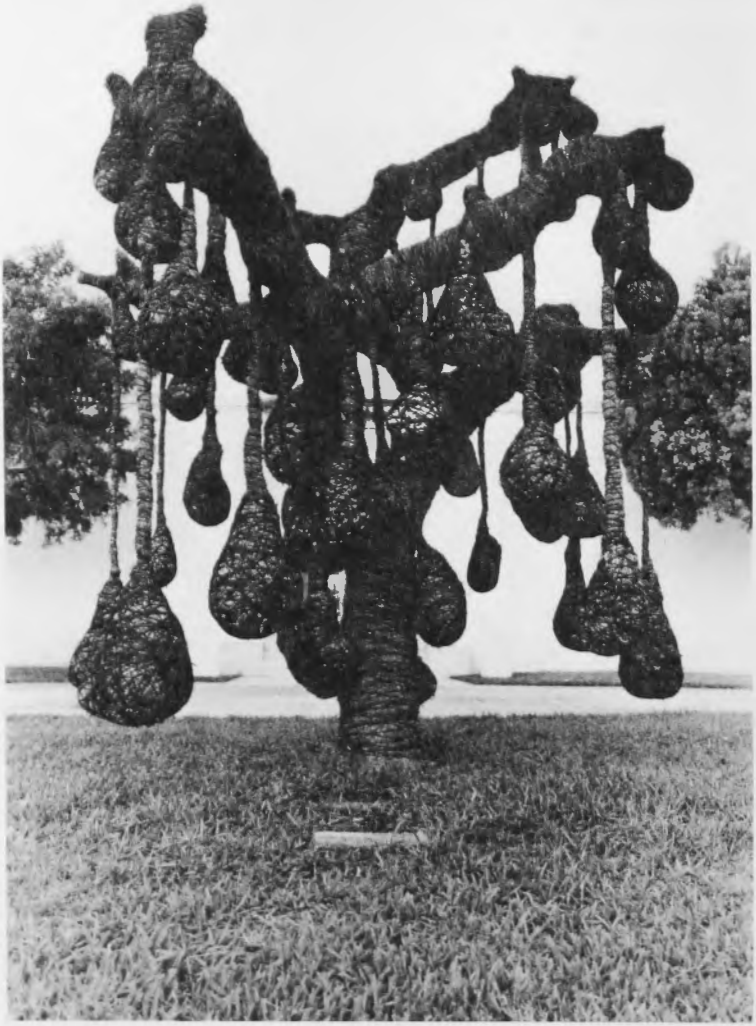
At 37, Coyne has both an accomplished body of work behind her and an abundance of growth ahead of her. Organic is, for Coyne, a method of operation. She doesn't stand still and she doesn't repeat herself. She tends to get it right the first time and moves on. So, what we can expect in the future from Coyne, an artist so finely attuned to the subterranean workings of "shape's life," is, most probably, the unexpected.

1/15/91

# PETAH COYNE
## SCULPTURE

**SCULPTURE CENTER INSTALLATION**

Mixed Media, 1987



**NORTON GALLERY "EMERGING FIGURE"**

1989, West Palm Beach, Florida

**INSTALLATION VIEW EQUITABLE WHITNEY**

Mixed Media, 1987–88

**EQUITABLE WHITNEY INSTALLATION (DETAIL)**

Mixed Media, 1987–88

***UNTITLED (636)***

Mixed Media, 127" x 61" x 36", 1988

**UNTITLED INSTALLATION**

Brooklyn Museum, September–December, 1989

WOLFGANG GIEGERICH

# THE ROCKET AND THE LAUNCHING BASE

## Or: The Leap from the Imaginal Into the Outer Space Named "Reality"[1]

Whatever can be said about the insignificance of the flight to the moon and other outer space missions from a practical and humanistic point of view, psychologically and "metaphysically" the venture into space is an event of highest historical importance. It is the symbol signalling that a millennia-old, "eternal" truth has become obsolete: the distinction between the sublunar world and the heavens. In another sense, too, rockets can easily be seen as a symbol of this century; we just have to think of the skyrocketing development in the sciences and in industry. Nevertheless, what I call "natural consciousness," the consciousness which imagines things in analogy to visual perception, is in the way of a truly symbolic and psychological understanding of the rocket as well as of our age.

To "natural consciousness" rockets are particular objects *in* reality among millions of other objects. It is possible to move beyond natural consciousness. In the *Kena Upanishad,* e.g., the move is made from "what the eyes can see" to "what opens the eyes." Similarly, Archetypal Psychology moved from the literal to the imaginal, and Hegel has shown how the transition from the natural mind to Understanding transports us into a "*second* supersensible world," which in contrast to the first supersensible world (the Platonic realm of timeless Forms), is not a realm above and beyond ordinary reality, but an inverted world, that is to say the selfsame world, but as seen when one stands on one's head. We need to make such a move in order to be able to understand the rocket not as a thing in reality, but as the form *of* our (kind of) reality, the form of Western man's consciousness, "containing" in itself everything that constitutes the world as a whole, including the literal rockets.

Another difference with natural consciousness is that whereas it tends to fear a nuclear missile attack as a possible future event to be prevented at all cost, I would propose that this event has happened long ago and is the very basis of the existence of Western man, indeed of "reality" as such. "Reality" as we in the Occident experience it, is not as we might expect the word for what is naturally[2] given and exists both prior to, and independent of, our thinking about it. Rather, it is the result of a violent, "artificial" event in the soul's history: the launching of a rocket. The purpose of this paper

is to get us into the rocket, into its imagination. Factually we have lived in this (type of) reality for more than two thousand years. But not consciously and imaginally. It is also a psychological necessity for us to finally move unreservedly our awareness and imagination into what has been our factual abode all along.

Rockets need bases, solid, unyielding foundations from which they can takeoff. A third difference to the natural view, which would hold that the launching base and the rocket are two separate things and that the once launched rocket leaves the base behind, is that as far as the imaginal missile is concerned it is by launching the rocket that the launching base is established for the first time. The base is not merely the origin (past) of the rocket and the target not only its (future) destination. The archetypal rocket creates its own launching base as it is flying and heading for its target. Rocket, target, and base are one and the same.

There could be no such base from which a literal rocket could be fired as long as, during the ritualistic, mythological stage of civilization,[3] man lived embedded in the imaginal. The mythical imagination does not allow for the kind of fixation necessary to constitute a base. A base needs the reliability of positivity (positive fact) as the metaphysical equivalent of a thick layer of "concrete." It must be an unyielding rock. And it must be on a geometrically determined exact position, or else the rocket could not be reliably brought into its calculated ballistic course. This kind of mathematical exactitude and positivistic reliability of a solid focal point is contrary to the world of myth and ritual.

One might object here that the mythological imagination possessed the notion of an eminent focal point, too, in the idea of the center of the Earth, located in certain geographical locations, such as in Delphi. Nevertheless, this center point lacked the literal, positivistic properties required of a base; it was not a geographical, physical fact, not a center in the rigidly fixed sense of geometry, because there were *many* centers of the Earth. Each temple, each sanctuary, indeed each temporary location of a ritual ceremony was, for the duration of the ritual, the center of the Earth. Thus, despite being *the* center, it was not a literal reality and did not possess the unambiguous, unshifting self-identity required of a positive location. The center could potentially be anywhere because "center" here was not defined in terms of equal distance from the circumference (in which case there would be only one single spot that could be called center), but by virtue of its "metaphysical" quality: it was the point at which a vertical dimension broke through the horizontal surface of our everyday world, opening up for us the depth of the underworld and the height of heaven. So, just as horizontally the center could not be unequivocally identified, it neither could serve, in a vertical direction, as the unshakable foundation providing the necessary resistance for rockets to push off from, inasmuch

as its express meaning was to *open up* the solid ground under us to the dimension of depth (which by definition is bottomless).

It was the achievement of Christianity to give mankind the idea of an absolutely firm ground. "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell [the former underworld] shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18), a church which in turn is described as "the pillar and ground of truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock" (Matt. 7:24 ff.). "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). In these quotations a longing for something absolutely solid expresses itself, for a literal, positive fixed point that could outlast the change of time. It is the will for a reversal in the very meaning of "ground": base, bedrock, foundation to stand on, instead of bottomless depth (as in: the ground of the sea, of Hell etc.); and ground as that which is *laid,* instead of primordial ground whence all that is comes forth (as from a spring).

Christianity provided the solution to Archimedes' wish for a "point on which to stand," which would allow him to unhinge the universe. Christ is nothing else but this very Archimedean point, and at the same time Christ is he who indeed has unhinged the universe: "be of good cheer; I have overcome [*nenīneka,* conquered] the world" (John 16:33). In the sphere of myth, such a wish to unhinge the universe would have been unthinkable. The one hero who of all figures in Greek mythology might come closest to such a violent stance towards the world, Hercules, precisely did not make use of the opportunity given to him of doing something like unhinging the universe. He did, it is true, take over the vault of heaven from Atlas, but he dutifully carried it for him and later returned it to him without having upset the order of the cosmos.

One could think that the message of the rock provided for us in Christ is just a bold allegation which, as mere allegation, is itself unfounded. This is how we generally think about religious statements: they are a matter of faith, i.e., it is up to us whether we believe in them or not. But I suggest that it is otherwise. Christianity *is* what it promises and teaches. It is not a matter of belief. By naively relegating the Christian message to the sphere of mere subjective beliefs we protect ourselves from realizing what we are up against. Christianity *in fact* laid the very ground that it preaches. More, it established the ontological nature of "ground" as rock, after it had previously been the essence of ground to be unfathomable depth.

A famous poster by James Montgomery Flagg used to recruit volunteers for the U.S. Army during World War I, shows a man dressed as Uncle Sam who points with his index finger directly at the viewer saying, "I want

YOU." Something extraordinary is happening here. The person drawn or painted on the poster bursts, as it were, with his pointed index finger and his piercing look through the plane of the picture; he breaks out of his containment within the fictional or imaginal world of the picture into the literal "external" reality where the flesh and blood viewers live.

James Montgomery Flagg, World War I recruiting poster. The poster, in which Flagg portrayed himself, was so successful that it was reused during World War II. Total distribution: 4 million copies.

This poster provides a simple and precise way to understand the nature of Christianity's singular achievement. Christianity too bursts through the "canvas" of the "painting," the "screen" of the "movie" that it presents or the "text" of the "mythos" it has to tell. By exploding the plane of the "picture," it leaps out of the sphere of imaginal reality and into the outer space of literal reality—a reality which however is originally created only by this very act of an archetypal, primordial leap. Christianity too focuses on the individual with a piercing look and points the index finger directly at him. It addresses him point-blank, demanding of him so to speak at gunpoint, "Jesus Christ wants YOU."

With the idea of the Christian attack on the individual (*all* individuals) "at gunpoint" I am not referring to the aggressive form of preaching and missionizing found among certain radical fundamentalists. Their behavior might be considered, from the point of view of Christian theology itself, as

a deplorable aberration, as an empirical (ontic) mistake of the kinds that occur in the history of any movement due to the misunderstanding of particular individuals practicing it. I am thinking rather of the (ontological) attack on the individual inherent in the very logic of the Christian message. From the onset, Christianity comes forward with an absolute claim on everyone. As much as factually Christianity must leave us free to decide, logically (in its ontological view of man) it does not give us any choice, for according to it we are metaphysically threatened, in case of our refusal, by eternal, absolute damnation. We simply must volunteer as recruits. There is no escape, no alternative, since the only alternative is defined as the very idea of a non-alternative: Hell. And as long as we have not joined, we *have already been* metaphysically dumped by being labelled sinner (in the theological sense of sin). We do not really exist. We have no Life. We are a collective corpse.

In the advertising business we find the idea of the "target audience." It is based on the realization that the needs, tastes and the "language" of people are different so that what one sells and how one sells it to them has to differ accordingly. In the Christian context and in view of the Christian unrelenting grip on the individual we have to give this notion a much more radical, namely "metaphysical" meaning. Here it does not signify the selective ontic group at which the Christian message is aimed; it signifies that mankind as such is given the (onto-) logical status of "audience" *as* "target" for the first time, *as* "aim" of a point-blank address, indeed, of a kind of attack. Audience now is what needs to be reached, and reached out for with an absolute claim. Christianity does not use a polite form of address, by which a respect for the untouchable dignity of the Other would be shown and a possible trespassing into his private sphere would be avoided. Christianity addresses the Other almost unseemly with the blunt "Jesus Christ wants YOU"; indeed, Christianity *is* the express will for an intrusion and penetration into the inner sanctum of a personality.

The target is already inherent in the core of the Christian drama itself and does not only arise with the selling of it. Whereas in other myths and dramas the protagonists interact only with the other "actors on stage" (with the Gods or mythic heroes *in illo tempore),* Christ's life has from the onset a target outside his own sphere. His essential interaction is not with God, His Father, nor with His disciples, nor with other personages in His drama. It is the very point of the Christian play to destroy the "illusion" of the play as a self-contained drama by directly relating to and directly involving the audience: the real direction is away from the stage, the only target of Christ's life is to die *for* His unknown, anonymous *spectators*—mankind at large: for *their* redemption. A complete reversal. The audience no longer has to be seduced into the imagination of the play and thereby be drawn into a mimetic participation in the myth on a kind of visionary level in the depth

of soul. The mythic hero, having become their servant (Matt. 20:28, Luke 22:27), steps out before the stage to address them directly, not only through a literal sermon, but also and more so by enacting the drama of his life so to speak in front of the now closed curtain, on the proscenium or even in the sober, commonplace reality of the "auditorium": in the ordinary empirical-historical world,[4] Christ wants to reach man precisely in his everyday reality.

This directedness outward is what gives the Christian message the character of a missile. Because Christianity has a missile nature, it must see itself essentially vis-à-vis an audience defined as a target that absolutely must be hit. And conversely, because it has a target, it takes on the character of a missile that does not stay put *in illo tempore,* does not stay put on the stage or behind the glass covering a painting, but can and must traject through the "movie screen" and shoot out into the literal reality of hard facts, of the "real" audience "out there." Due to this direction toward an external target, the differentiation of two kinds of reality becomes possible. One could also say their original separation, comparable to a cell division, is taking place: positive reality out there (which for us is reality proper) and reality within the image or story (which, because of the protagonist's breaking out of the play, or rather redirecting the thrust of the play directly towards the audience, was degraded to a secondary reality and is for us no more than "mere fiction," "imaginary," an "illusion").

So it is the firing of the Christian rocket that originally opened up for itself an *outer*space into which it could pass that previously simply had not existed. This space owes its existence to the revolutionary idea of a message as missile and an audience as target, which idea *is* the bursting of the imaginal. We have lived in the (notion of) reality conquered by Christianity for so long that it is hard for us to realize that this is a revolutionary invention and that there could have been, during the age of myth, a mode of being-in-the-world characterized by a fundamentally different constitution of reality, one in which everything was enveloped within the aura of the imaginal and which simply did not have anything "outside" itself. We can get an idea of this former constitution of reality by looking at a change to be observed in works of early Greek art.

As B. Schweitzer and Bruno Snell[5] have pointed out, in the case of early Greek statues the statue was, without hesitation, identified with the person portrayed. Thus the inscription on a statue read, e.g.: "I am Chares, ruler of Teichiussa." Only in Athens would you find inscriptions like "I am the image of such and such. . .," which is a way of putting it that corresponds to the modern view. For the Athenians the reality of the "real" person had obviously been separated from that of his image. The statue only referred or pointed to the ruler, it "signified" or "represented" or "reminded of" him, but it was not identical with him. In the earlier situation, the statue itself

spoke as an "I" and it *was* at once him whom it, as we must say from our modern point of view, "represented": "I am Chares." The image obviously radiated the authority of the ruler. The conviction of his kingly power must have descended upon the viewer from the mere sight of the statue. The aura of Chares was immediately and fully present in the image, so that the viewer was overcome with awe and enwrapped in the spell emanating from the statue. The image had the power to seduce the viewers into its own reality. And thus the viewers were indeed *inside* the picture's imaginal world, surrounded as it were on all sides by its aura. In the capacity of the image to envelop the viewer in the spell of its archetypal depth lay its quiet, non-violent authority over him and the truth of its statement, "*I am* Chares, the *ruler*. . ." It was an authority based not on empirical power in "outer" reality (weapons, army, police), but on the radiance from the imaginal (Sanskrit *bharga, tejas, śrī:* shine, Fortuna, *Königsheil,* royalty, i.e. the substance of light that a king must be filled with in order to be a true king). We can still today, amidst a thoroughly Christianized and democratic environment, have a remote intuition of the spellbinding force of the imaginal, when a novel or movie fascinates us so that we live for a while in its world, taken in and moved by its atmosphere, or when crowds of people line the streets on the occasion of the state visit of some royalty, to at least for a moment bathe in the royal *śrī* emanating from them.

In archaic civilizations, man lived in this kind of imaginal reality. There was no other. The Christian message with its express and piercing YOU in "Jesus Christ wants YOU" radically expels the viewer or listener out of his embeddedness in the imaginal. It doesn't draw us into its spell, not even into that of its own imaginal truth, but *confronts,* hits us with it, irredeemably setting us apart from and over against it. The stage curtain to the imaginal is definitively closed. The YOU puts us back in our place on the auditorium side of the curtain and stops the desire of the soul's passion and imagination to (imaginally) transgress[6] to the other side of the curtain into the divine drama on stage. It thus thrusts us into an "outside" world, turns us into isolated individuals, egos, standing naked vis-à-vis Christ. Only the existentially isolated individual relentlessly thrown back upon himself can decide for Christ; and in order to belong to Him, we *must* de-cide, all by ourselves from the core of our individual existence. An unambiguous and deliberate yes or no. It will not do to be simply attracted, charmed by the images of the Christian religion. Having decided for Him will be the ultimate affirmation for being an outcast from mythic reality and for being thrown back upon one's isolated individuality—thrown back upon the *principle of* the One, the principle of isolation. For if Christ addresses us point-bank with his demand to belong to Him, this is only the consequence of the fact that *this* Christ is Himself such an express YOU, even more than

that: He is the principle of the possibility to point at and "mean" things or people with that confrontational pointedness.

Three characteristics of the penetration through the surface of the image into the outer space of literalistic reality can be distinguished. First: the direct, abstract pointing (the "This"), second: the One, and third: the All.

The following biblical quotations point to the first: "*This* is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me" (John 1:30). "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, *This* is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). "*This* is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ" (1 John 5:6). "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made *that same* Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). ". . .it is *he* that talketh with thee" (John 9:37). The pointing and positing that penetrates the "canvas" of the image and enters literal reality expresses itself linguistically also in ways other than by use of the demonstrative pronoun. "*Thou* art the Christ, the Son of the living God," (Matt. 16:16). "*This day* is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). "*I* that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:26).

This, that same, I, thou, today (here and now): we are obviously within the world of the chapter on "sense-certainty" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This chapter is, as it were, merely the philosophical explication of what in the New Testament had been conquered with the attitude which speaks from the above quotations. To better understand the nature of this conquest, I want to return to the inscription "I am Chares, ruler. . ." and compare it with the last of the cited biblical quotations, "I. . .am he" or with that other famous one, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). At first glance the early Greek and the Christian sentences seem to have an identical grammatical structure. But they are fundamentally different statements. What the statue says has the character of a self-introduction; it provides information, communicating to the viewer the proper name and the "profession" of the person portrayed. Somebody shows himself and makes himself known. Christ's "I am the way, the truth, and the life," by contrast contains no factual information about the subject of the sentence; it is a formal identification, and this is why it can just as well be abbreviated "I am he." Jesus' statement does not tell us anything about him, about his "profession" or his particular nature. It does not, e.g., say, I am the *way*, as opposed to a place of repose. It only wants to assure us that He "is it."

All these propositions with a "this is," "today," "thou art," "I am" serve the purpose of arresting someone or something and identifying him or it in an almost criminological sense. The question around which everything revolves from now on is, "Is it he, or is it not he?" It is the question of the crime novels, the whodunits, of detectives and judges—and it is the question of faith-and-doubt. This is why the identification can also be denied: It isn't he! Thus we read e.g., "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph,

whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?" (John 6:42). It is a matter of cornering, pinpointing, holding at bay, apprehending: This is him! He has done it! Whereas Chares reveals himself to us and imposes himself on us, the statement by Jesus turns against Himself and nails Him down in or on Himself. The "I am he" is actually a (self-) incrimination and as such synonymous with the "this is he" or "you are the one" by which the Christ is firmly imprisoned in the Jesus of Nazareth, or by which God is locked into the historical Jesus. Christ was not only nailed down at the time of his crucifixion, but to be He who is nailed down to Himself, who is absolutely identified with Himself, indeed, to be the *principle* of pinpointedness and fixation is his very nature.

The quasi-judicial situation also explains the decisive role of witnesses in Christianity. Every Christian has to be one more witness to "incriminate" Jesus anew. The innermost purpose of the Christian existence seems to be the act of confining the imaginal Christ in the empirical, historical Jesus and reaffirming His solitary confinement there time and again.

In other religions, too, there were or are empirical persons really embodying Gods, e.g. the Egyptian Pharaoh or the Dalai Lama. But here you could never say, "*This* is he," because the "Pharaoh existence" or the "Dalai Lama existence" was not exclusively imprisoned in one single historical individual; it was disseminated into the whole series of Pharaohs or Dalai Lamas, comprising thousands of years and future embodiments as well. To be sure, it was indeed present in the particular human being who happened to be the present embodiment, but no Pharaoh, no Dalai Lama has his divinity as his personal property. On the contrary, he is, precisely because he is the incarnation of a divine person, de-emphasized as the empirical individual that he is and is instead reintegrated into the larger divine reality that he has to embody, and he is relativized by its manifold embodiments in previous and future persons. By virtue of the dissemination of the incarnation into each of its many manifestations, his presence is essentially *gentle*, whereas the entire divinity of Christ is concentrated in the single historical person Jesus of Nazareth as the exclusive focus of History as such, which endows the Christian incarnation with a violent acuteness. Every possible "here" of a theophany or epiphany has once and for all been stuffed into the exclusive historical Jesus so that no actual here and now before or after Him can be the place of a full-fledged epiphany anymore. The "yonder" of that Jesus of Nazareth has swallowed up every possible "here and now." It has deprived Time of its life and soul and seized it, so that Time can no longer have its life in the flux of ever new moments receiving their fullness through the epiphanic presence of diverse divine personages. Now there is only one single fulfilled moment *(kairós)* in all of history, leaving the entire remainder of time essentially (psychologically) empty.

With these observations we have already entered the discussion of the second characteristic of the leap bursting through the imaginal nature of Being: the One. It is the theme of the absolute exclusiveness of the Christ. Jesus Christ is the One and Only. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus Christ is surrounded and protected on all sides by negations: no man, neither in any other, none other under heaven. The pointing (the positing of the "This is he") obviously does not point to a positive, substantive, sensual content, but essentially serves the purpose of excluding and fending off all concrete names, concreteness as such. The "This is he" means the reduction to a space left blank, to a naked point in the geometrical sense: the Alpha and Omega; the *axis mundi;* the turning point of Time; the zero point of history. For the point is essentially zero point, because it has no extension, no diffusion into the breadth of the world. The ramming in of the holy rood on Golgotha is the planting (positing) of the zero point into Being, which previously had had a mythic, imaginal nature. The rood is the archetypal image of the idea that is expressly stated in the proposition, "This is he." And the crucifix, as two intersecting coordinate axes, is the symbol of the zero point of Being and of the subordination of Being under a system of coordinates. Long before the number zero had been accepted in mathematics, Christianity had invented the zero as a metaphysical principle. And characteristically enough the mathematical recognition of zero as a number occurred during that age in which the actual realization of Christianity began,[7] namely in the year 1629 (one year after Harvey had discovered the circulation of the blood[8]) and again, only a few years later, by one of the great minds who decisively advanced the realization of Christianity: Descartes (1637). For Descartes provided modern man with the *fundamentum inconcussum,* the ego, that rock on which the modern period could build its house and from which it could unhinge the natural world (the world experienced mythically or imaginally).

Just as in mathematics the zero concept made it possible to break out of the realm of natural (positive) numbers and conquer the worlds of negative, irrational, imaginary and transcendent numbers (for which reason the zero has been termed mathematics' most momentous invention), so the metaphysical zero is the point at which, figuratively speaking, Uncle Sam breaks through the containment in natural (imaginal) reality and into positive reality "out there."

We miss the very meaning of the Christian message if we do not conceive the exclusiveness of Jesus Christ strictly as the "One" which is the zero or a point. One could of course start with the idea of a real, natural person whose name was Jesus of Nazareth and who had all kinds of

particular traits, and then say that in this person, chosen by God from among all men, the Messiah revealed himself. But this view would fall short of the Christian idea. It would still be a *pagan* reception of Christianity, the translation of the specifically Christian back into a mythological version of it. It cannot be that God's son, so to speak by mere chance, happened to incarnate only in the single human person named Jesus and that therefore it would at least theoretically be feasible that the Christ could just as well have been born "in various other names under heaven" and at various other times. Jesus must, to begin with and by necessity, unquestionably be the One and Only, if He is to be the Jesus Christ. But if He is the One absolute, then He is from the outset the empty, extensionless point. Even His name cannot be a concrete name under Heaven; it must be the name for "no-name," for the abstract "this."

An identification or equation is carried out with the formulations "This is he." "Jesus, the Christ" and other versions of this idea. However, according to what was just said it is not that a known empirical person here and a known transcendental notion there are being taken up and then, by means of the copula, equated. "Jesus, the Christ" is not a phrase like "Einstein, the physicist" or "Napoleon, the Emperor of the French." It is not a proposition at all. Rather, "Jesus (is) the Christ" is the daring *act* of equating, the *event* of the positing of the "this": the leap out of the mythical or imaginal into the positive-factual ("positivistic").

If the phrase "Jesus, the Christ" were to connect and identify two known entities (two concrete contents) as in the case of "Einstein, the physicist" (we know who Einstein was, and we know what a physicist is), it would remain within the same old sphere of reality without bursting through it in a radical leap. This fundamental breakout could only be achieved if in the phrase "Jesus, the Christ" *nothing* is identified, nothing existing prior and independently of the act of identification. It could only be achieved if the phrase as act is no more and no less than the archetypal *schema* of identification, the original, first-time positing of the equal sign, and if the particular contents of subject and predicate, of "Jesus of Nazareth" and "Christ," dissolve (as an empty "this" on the one hand and an empty "he" on the other) in the empty equal sign as the abstract exclusive One, i.e., the zero. If Jesus Christ is really supposed to have overcome the world and to redeem us from it, He cannot first be a concrete person with many attributes and then also be the Incarnate. He must have His very nature in being the naked event of "This is he," and everything else that we are taught about Him must follow from, and be contained within, this equation. The graphic, vivid image of Jesus Christ to be found in Christian piety *is* the graphically embellished image *of the* zero established in "This is he." Otherwise salvation could not work.

I said earlier that Christian teachings did not have the status of mere allegations, but that Christianity *is* what it claims to be. Now it has become clear why this has to be the case. Paul's "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" is in fact no mere assertion to be believed or not, any more than the invention of the wheel or the recipe for mixing gunpowder or building the atomic bomb are mere matters of faith. No, Paul's statement *is* the truth that it formulates, because, first, in identifying or equating Jesus as the Christ, it performs, by virtue of this act of nailing down, the positing of the "this," which amounts to the leap out of the mythical sphere, and, second, because the solid foundation *is* nothing else but this act of an *originary* positing. The positing of "This (is he)" is the condition of the a priori possibility of a positive (positivistic) reality, a reality that no longer owes its existence and constitution to the epiphanic manifestation of the Gods, but has been established by virtue of a leap and owes its existence to the act of positing.

And there is no other way than by means of the act of positing the zero established in "Jesus, the Christ" to get to a fixed Archimedean point outside the "abysmal" world of the mythical imagination. But where the act of identification and of establishing the zero point has truly occurred, there also the foundation has truly been laid: the origin (zero point) for an all-encompassing system of coordinates (the cross of the world) has been set up. There can indeed be no other foundation that could be laid, for the zero point exists only once. Even if its invention should occur repeatedly, it would be the invention of the same thing.

Thus it is true too that, as holy writ states, our faith "is the victory that overcometh the world. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:4f. and 12). These statements are not themselves mere matters of faith, as we innocently like to believe to avoid the insight that we are dealing here with hard facts governing our lives no matter whether we define ourselves as believers or not. This innocence is a luxury that we cannot afford any longer. He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God has performed the act of identification, which *is* the only way to overcome the world, because in that act he once and for all breaks out of the natural (i.e. mythical, imaginal) world and archetypally opens up for himself the literalness of Being, the positivity of reality (whose theological name is "Eternal Life"). The main statements of Christianity do not make any "mysterious" assertions. In Kantian terminology, one might indeed call them analytic (rather than synthetic) propositions: propositions whose predicate adds nothing new to the notion expressed in the subject, but only expressly unfolds what was contained in that notion to begin with, such as "he who jumps into water will get wet." It is evident that the leap into water implies getting wet, and we all know that a leap

into water is a real (practical) possibility. Likewise is it evident that he who performs the leap into "This is he" has "eternal life." And there can be no doubt that this leap is a practical possibility: because we all live in the Outer Space, in the reality established by this leap two thousand years ago.

In the natural world everything is contained within the mythical shine. Christ would be a mythical image here, but so would the man Jesus of Nazareth, like every empirical event, be potentially enveloped in the mythical sphere. More fundamentally, the people of old even derived their descendence (and thus ultimately their actual nature) from the Gods. Despite their being mortals, they belonged to one and the same unbroken sphere with the Gods. Divine and human, archetypal and empirical realities mirrored each other, and existence was completely enwrapped in this unending process of mutual reflection, without there being an outside, the fixed point of a positive-factual world.

The Uncle Sam shown on our poster had an easy time breaking out of the imaginal because for the artist who painted him there had been, after 2000 years of Christianity, two kinds of reality all along, the imaginary one on paper or canvas, and the one in which the artist himself lived. This was of course very different for the primordial leap out of the mythical constitution of Being, because "prior" to this leap there had not been any reality other than the mythical one. Here the leap had to originally create for itself out of nowhere, so to speak, the realm into which it would leap. The "This is he" or "Jesus, the Christ" could successfully bring about the breakthrough through the mythical and the initial establishment of positive reality in the following way. By absolutely singling out from amidst the whole extent of the manifold imaginal reality one point (which is *only* reduced to a point or zero by this act of singling out) as the One and Only and by establishing it as an unequivocal "this" to be focussed on with one's total force; and further, by absolutely equating this "this" with "Christ" (the likewise absolutized idea of *every* mythic or metaphysical worth), everything else in the world, all things and events, indeed nature as such was deprived of its autonomous mythic-metaphysical dignity: of the possibility to be "Christ," i.e. to be divine or epiphanic. With the identification, a duality of "worlds" entered the world: Jesus Christ here, secular reality there; or within "Jesus Christ": the empirical individual here, the divine person there. In placing an *equal* sign between the "this" and the Christ, an irreconcilable *division* between the one and the other (this world and the beyond) has simultaneously been set up for the first time.[9]

It is the absolute separation and the simultaneous absolute identification of the sundered poles of this difference that laid the "firm foundation" for the first time: the literalness and positivity of Being as such. This is the foundation upon which the world of positive facts, radically excised from mythic imaginality, can be built just as literal faith in metaphysical "truths"

could be based upon it: because both are rooted in the divided identity characteristic of Christianity properly understood. The positive factualness (literalness) however is based on the negation inherent in the "This is he" or "none other." More precisely: the positivity of the positive-factual is based on the negativity of the zero. Without the absolute negation, without the radical withdrawal from the fullness and breadth of the mythic world to the empty zero point, there would be no positive reality, no Archimedean rock from which to launch the rockets called scientific, technological, and industrial, rockets by which the universe has indeed already been unhinged.

But the poster of Uncle Sam is and remains a poster, an image. The Uncle Sam represented there does not in fact step out of the picture to us, the audience. He only *appears* to do so as long as we for our part look at the poster naturally, imaginally: are seduced into its aura. The bursting of the image occurs in the image and as image. Keeping this in mind, it becomes evident that the "this is he" and the positive reality originating from the leap out of the mythic world does not in fact remove us from the mythical imagination into the Outer Space of the "real" world, but stays within the imaginal. The Outer Space is itself a mythic fantasy which, however, in order to *be* "outside" the imaginal, while in fact being within it, has to conceal its imaginal nature and be in radical opposition to every other mythic image. The bursting of the imaginal merely amounts to a radical restriction and constriction of the selfsame mythic sphere to a single archetypal idea within it, the idea of the empty "this," which *by being exclusively zeroed in on* now takes on the imaginal appearance of being the one and only true reality. The wealth of our scientific knowledge about the positive facts of reality is nothing else but the amplification or explication of this one archetypal "image," the zero.

We think that the black holes discovered by the astronomers are many light years away from us out there in outer space. We do not realize that ever since that leap out of the imaginal we have all along been living in an Outer Space that is itself *the* black hole. But the fact that the idea of black holes was discovered in this century in the astronomical universe only underlines once more the psychological insight that the first inkling of major realizations about ourselves (about our psycho-logic) always comes to us from without. That the black holes could be discovered in this century might indicate that the time has come for us to realize that we are, right here, sitting *in* the black hole and that our entire reality actually has the nature of such a black hole: it is the result of Western man's having devotedly dug himself into the ever more minute details of one single archetypal image ("Uncle Sam wants YOU" or "This is he") on which he had monomaniacally (monotheistically) zeroed in, blowing this zero point up to a total universe

and denying the existence of all the many other archetypal images around it as well as blinding himself to its own nature as image.

Not much needs to be added about the third characteristic of the establishment of the launching base. The third aspect is seemingly the opposite of the single zero point: the All, the whole, totality. The problem of the zero point is that it does not exist as long as there is *something*, something that besides the One can claim to be something in its own right. For next to it, the zero would be simply nothing. And the problem of the One absolute is that it is not the One as long as there are others (other names under heaven). For if it is not *the* One, then it, too, is just one of the many thousand things in the mythic world and does not turn into the foundation laid. This is why the zero has to become the *principle* of the whole, and its sole principle. It must have the status of an Hegelian *Aufhebung* (supercession) of the natural things altogether and thus inhabit a fundamentally higher level. Every thing must be subjected to it, gathered up under its rule (which is what makes the zero point the black hole). This is what we find expressed in Eph. 1:10, "That. . .he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." Jesus the Christ (or the empty point of "This is he") as the Lord over the All.

How can everything be subdued under the rule of the zero? How can the All be made to disappear in the irresistible suction of a black hole? The answer to this question is the cross, which is the archetypal idea of the system of coordinates as a grid for everything that is. This archetypal system of coordinates is indeed capable of swallowing up the entire natural (mythic) cosmos and of thereby turning the latter into the single point of the positivistic "universe." And only with the cosmos as a whole having been transmuted into the positivistic literalness of "universe" does a firm *imaginal* basis for the launching of missiles exist, so that *literal* bases and rockets could be built, too. If it were not the whole world that is rendered unambiguously reliable by being subsumed under a single system, any particular base within it, be it in itself as solid as can be, would as a whole be unstable.

In "universe" the One and the All are the same (because here everything that exists exists only by virtue of, and in terms of its relation to, the zero point), just as the trajectory of the missile heading for its target is identical with the absorbing power of the black hole or as the skyrocketing development of the sciences, of technology and industry is identical with the ever more solid cementation of the uni-verse as the archetypal launching base.[10] But they all are equally distant from the manifold eachness characteristic of natural actuality.

## Notes

1 This paper is in the main based on a chapter from the author's book *Drachenkampf oder Initiation ins Nuklearzeitalter* (vol. II of his *Psychoanalyse der Atombombe*), (Zurich: Schweizer Spiegel Verlag, Raben-Reihe, 1989). English versions of other chapters of this work have appeared in *Spring* 1985 and 1988, in *Heal or Die, Psychotherapists Confront Nuclear Annihilation*, ed. K. Porter et al., New York 1987, and in *Facing Apocalypse*, ed. V. Andrews et al., (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1987).

2. It is to be noted that the word "natural" is used here in two different, almost opposite senses: in connection with words like "mind" it is somewhat synonymous with "naturalistic fallacy" and in contradistinction to a deeper, imaginal understanding; in reference to Being or the world it denotes a state prior to, and undisturbed by, an artificial human intervention establishing a firm standpoint *vis-à-vis* the imagination.
3. In the sense of Heino Gehrts. Gerhts distinguishes four distinct successive cultural stages, the shamanistic, the ritualistic, the religious, and the scientific-technological cultures, a watershed separating the first two from the others. In other words, religion for Gehrts is not an all-comprehensive word also applying to shamanism and the ritualistic mode of being in the world. Rather, the religious stage of culture is characterized by a very different, almost opposite stance of man in the cosmos, a different sense of time, etc., much closer to the scientific stance than to the earlier two.
4. The tendency in some modern theater to directly and literally involve the audience or to make the play *immediately* "relevant" for their social or political concerns can perhaps be seen as a ritual mimesis of the Christian need to undermine, within the play, the illusion of the play and to prevent thereby a "regression" to a deeper (mythical, imaginal: pagan) level of involvement.
5. See Bruno Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes. Studien zur Entstehung des europäischen Denkens bei den Griechen*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), p. 101.
6. Cf. James Hillman, "A Psychology of Transgression Drawn from an Incest Dream," *Spring* 1987, pp. 66–76.
7. I consider the Middle Ages as a preliminary stage of Christianity. It was the age of Scholasticism, as it aptly termed itself, the age of an initial schooling of Western man in the inner structure of Christian thought, in other words a kind of Christian propaedeutics. With the beginning of the modern period, man had "graduated" from this schooling, so that with the Christian thought pattern having become second nature for him, he no longer needed to express his thoughts in literally (dogmatically) Christian terms. Whatever he would think or study he would necessarily think in a thoroughly Christian spirit.
8. See my "Deliverance from the Stream of Events: Okeanos and the Circulation of the Blood," *Sulfur 21* (Winter 1988), pp. 118–140.
9. "For the first time" in this paper should not be taken too literally. I am less concerned with literal first beginnings in historical time than with archetypal, (psycho-) logical roots and where they found their highest, most adequate formulation in historical time.
10. We could be fooled by modern trends toward a pluralism of theories and world models and take them as a sign for a move beyond the monolithic universe. But I believe that this (empirical, literal) pluralism of methods and models is in the service of the (psychological or ontological) monism of uni-verse.

# EMILE SNYDER
# THE ARCHIPELAGO

Broken shells which the gulls have spitted out  mussels
emptied of meat on this rock where we're sunning  here
everything is in the realm of memories

Am I the remembrance or the birth of a life

Askerön  gulls in the night-sun  I come at last to this
moment when contradictions make sense

But even here amidst the warmth of rocks Night is calling
I have every intention to make it wait

Night will simply have to be patient to abide by the formalities
of departure

Awakened by the gulls I walked down to the water the
    archipelago
asleep between the orange sky and the North Sea  the noise of a
boat stretching to live

Your body stretching on the rocks  my penis on the edge of
a sea shell  the smell of salt and dill

Springing out of the glacial water you come to me  a sea shell
whitened by the wind  next to you I feel Mediterranean

I begin to understand the shy radiance of the rose-hips
along the path that leads to the water

I have lost so much time in not touching you the right
way  we shall have to try again more *tenderly*

*Askerön, Summer 1988*

# WILLIAM CORBETT

## COLLARBONE

Thrice broken right
clavicle pushed up
a calcium knob
forgotten until shaving
squinting catch in the
mirror its half buried
golf ball rise.
Broken first tackled
tumbling down
Stadler's yard em-
bankment. Six weeks
in a canvas sling.
Broken again playing
touch late afternoon
November 22, 1963
as I dropped back
to pass was hit,
blindsided and toppled
shoulder first
crumpled on hard ground
my collarbone
exploded.
The doctor waved
aside a break,
perhaps bewildered
to distraction as we were,
insisting my dangly
arm needed a wrench
back into its socket.
He had my friend

steady my other arm
then pull-twisted,
uselessly pushed
through my screams.
The doctor set
the shoulder under
a plaster yoke,
an armor cape,
a breast to beat
and make a hollow
noise.
Before I slept
drugged I drank
with friend Charlie
and Jack the bartender.
We saw ourselves
as we never were
unreal years before
hunched to Jack's radio
listening, acting
in an old movie.
I rode uptown through
stilled and grim
New York past mourners
coiled around Port Authority
like dark rope.
Ruby leapt in
the hospital waiting room
gunning Oswald down
then moments then
another doc cracked
and peeled
my plaster shell,
broke a third time
ill knit collar
bones to tie flat
ragged ends under
immobilizing strap.
It didn't work

and a bump rose.
Break it again,
they urged, one
hammer blow.
We'll put you out.
No. And today
I feel the lump
see a boy
who carried the ball
break his jaw
against a knee
that day, his tears. . .
we all saw tears.
We saw wet faces
we never expected to.
We innocents froze
in our tv's blue
haze four days
and slept off our
stupor in the dark.

# DAVID BROMIGE
# ON A HUNDRED-BLOCK WALK

Words of the sentence like people
seen from above—sentence-like streets
to see people on

Earth protected by clouds
(City by flak)
A word by its sentence

Child's play by its blocks
and blocks that spark
Trees by their park

Anxious voices shut up (thus anxious)

One by ten

The women who work at Crocker
anxious as Wells-Fargo took over
Where are they now

Hive of the post-human humming
Pretty to picture a choir
Ugly with limbs that bend out

and glossy or dull
shells—shelves
upon which to set this or that

Dried trickles where mud was
Speak into the camera
Tell it to be kind (try to)

Now the irreparable
gives you the chance to be
human in a time-tested sense

"Even the most visual of crucifixions"

All show
all know it
is all show

To suppose is not to know
As we suppose we know
and demonstrate the magnet

"Loving you for 40 years"

For the children we were
unroll another map
than the up-to-date projection

Two times side by side sit
through an overlong movie
Heroes of the library-ship

If the bombs miss us
the city is large enough
to draw the enemy's interest

Closing the door on perspective
Mr. Shock offers distraction
"What people's music sounds like to me"

Crawl in between me
at the expense of proper form

Not a word as to why

The single odor of a desert

"Those nights I was happy"
To give his word for the fact
Protected by the tale

For the troublesome present

". . . Harvest moon" (and then
they lay awake counting
between lightning and clockwork)

How long want the ruins
to stick around—until
we forget what they mean?

As if one might be three
if not more, and might think
for each—yet stay one

The idea it should be bad
"And you do this before the King of England?"
"But Cary Grant didn't mind"

The idea it should be good

The grass = forgetfulness
The flames = exit from childhood
when all the great questions arrived

The screen = in flames
"I don't want to discuss it"
For the troublesome present

The moon (no) bigger than the clitoris

"Go away! Stop stopping me
seeing what could be here instead"

What frames the story has to be
non-story, sprayed on the pillars
Looking at the corner long felt bitter

Okay this once in a blue moon

In a familiar section of town
feel able to alternate routes
—but where one is the city?

Down to his hairy ass: footprints
plus the right to feel his feet
via pain, minus abstraction

The pure hate of abstraction

on the body's account. "Woman
says it, the priests steal it:
Bald, oder nie" Accept that

Except that
once in a lifetime

Turn page
Not there

Words where blood was
The scream in flames
What you actually do

would be the only story
What you had in mind

That you could look at

# CLARK COOLIDGE

## *from* THE BOOK OF DURING: FORMS TO THE GOOD

1.

See the coat? There's a man in it. All the types of animals view and race to draw drapes over where once were holes for the buttons on view. A crustlike drawing style, engaged to the lamp in fluorescence. So study the reflection bowled flesh must twist in an envelope press, the nipple pulls the mirror forward and down, a profile at that. Let's wait for her meters to read. It's a chain to cut with further metals at a scald, his head with it, her choice of breasts. Half-shod at this bolted doorway? But it almost is now fit to burst, and at the base three female balls. But she was angry at her spoons, I had lost my eyes inside a trunk. Fit to come running at, around the budge of the long avenues. He falls from the enlarged blocks for the crime of wearing her hair. The other entreat while the lamps. He is hitching up past my, and it is bold that wick, drain rabbit, skeleton under brief mate of boat and tongs. He has approached us, she claims, square of light and all grimace forth from the dark of a cat's facial scales. We dangled the salt seller cameras from a dainty run of flesh, iron haggard the spirit cream dimes standing breast plate in for. And behind the wicker scarp, look what hangs from the front of her slightly turned aside. She will be back.

I said Garsh around a rim and walked with her depending. Larger flanks grew vague as we kneeled for the pavement currents to settle, into freedom of the acrid promenade. But parasol failure draws clarinet success. Her body played to the heart's cunt, interior bundles showing in the thigh, the top ripped back a kiss. There is meanwhile a baking bag into toad on the step. He has rustled her out of the rubble, nine coal policemen high. And there is a hiding on, whose salt breasts, whose squid, whose opening nut. A cleverness of motion hides the barn. Have you gotten out of a sentence the ground? There are layers, therefore drawers. For the tent a vegetable spine to be found. Her hands are now in position her dress. The froth at the front of the meat in the drawer. I would imagine the light obtrude from those hanging but pacing still limbs. Upside foundhouse. Her prim flat of upheld statement that face now is, unseal the message, the heating flaps

beneath paid out ceilings. It's such a noble bowl in here, general heads, lion card towels, her open eyes in a gag. What turbulent lessons, gales of bright sud, enmeshment windows to be seen not looked from. I tied her tight upon the framework of my name, the one my neighbors. Chambers of the trunk above the wire tusk and empty solace she faces. Faces meaning an inability of the limbs to change.

Is there water below the nerve to speak this history? She is waiting poised on glass with her dress caught to striped backings. Meanwhile his band is sloshed. I will hold my medal to the window and hum up a crowd, a turned dawn beyond. Is there a need for women's heads below the gas lamps? I purchase her bone, my pelvis on her girdle, a dream that in the skirt float come bananas. So much bosom the face a featureless orb, fans protrude and a box, its lashes holding out, raising the glass from the squirm of her base. I have remembered nothing but her flesh, I would call for nothing baked out further.

Are there pictures of your tongue in this tiny? She dressed before glamour in the flat and a python bath taken. Knowledge up a ridge, the nose partakes? I would marry her breasts to the background, if such be lace ruff at the tassel prefect picture window and you see nothing but a yellow in the higher, a region from which the points of the spheres. I keep the cats near for that reason, kissing. Nebulous but nonetheless blossomed. A great crate of wake flood will meet our drops. Adder and tow at a brushed avenue. Made a Chrysler of her bust from which medal her hand hangs front.

Do we piss spice, naming such laps of bulk? Do you potato on a pin snooze? I could like her hair from here. I could light up and press in the belly here, whatever further cancels couched. Is your spirit of the smallnesses achieving redress in the battle of hands? She has made her place of a mould so brash, a tonally-committed vomiter on hold. Could you raise a cup to sing? A breast fell out of her bed. She was jump ridden. Other clothes were tied there, from which we pickled the strong, the wrong in holes. I could match her in ink with my cattle flenser. Displays too many organs fallen thus in a corner. She waits for reassembly plus a general drying.

Stop shooting that same thin image of the legs. An aisle of nothing but keys would prevent, but you scotch. Much meat to that cat, nothing to these cities but height. And a large opening at which the man will leave. She will hate to raise any image of his head besides. Nothing but statues await you all. That and injectors on the squared-off lifters. I'd rather she drop a limb and I erase something.

2.

There is too much water in my room. I know it already from the style of these things, the enormous advantage of endlessness. It all goes up in a bridge and breaks down into trains. Plunge, attain plunge height, then doctor her limbs. Monuments broke off in radio silence, massed nudes at the bases. Crowd hoards to pickle her. I could have made my way out of my own way. A pathetic breeze over the clocks, especially those in blackface, leaned on, where the terrible face will be washed away below my striped tints. Waters in funnel make up a blown glass.

It's too much to say with that shell for a face between your thighs. Things thus add up to cavernous beginnings. I could conduct the waters with a rod? She cannot tell, being faceless, but nevertheless perseveres naked beneath the waters. It is my friend I haul oil to over there in broad strokes. Beneath a body all out of birds, did you crack yourself on the rocks under there? Their permanent place in things, grand haunches await nickel-plate use. She was hovered over the colossal caves in meat circles, the waters used her, she was out. Wagged legs in stocking duck soup, raised before the pant braids on ledge waters, will not amount to what could have been seen of her, between her and the last place you'd look. First tie down the fluid, then smoke it. He waits. She is enfurled. The bed is rising away. A waterfall of her could not be a real human in chamber. How did this chamber form? How did her? A figure waits beyond her chest.

I would hate to have to drag alone all the rest of these humans out of here. Would she wake to the tide? Stone poles. Sauces made of the vegetative backing. A furniture kick. Will she press forward out of her bed the fabric turn to waters? As if she'd await an icicle snooze, feet turned down, statuary emerging. All drawn away in a wake of light waves, phosphors for the plumbing's chains, iris white in the rock fire. I'll all go up on a shingle, she a plate, washed asleep at the door. I didn't think it novel to tie off anywhere. But plenty of human seals at the edge of things. Penetrant waters, and in dislodge her piano has come undone, took it out from beneath her phones, a tooth too large for the bodice to shine through. Icicle twilight and we await the dressing of a dark brooding.

This room is now upside her dress. Tied down to her dreams she trills and the station waits brought down in beams. The floor a bracket loud of the central station. The man will allow her rise, float at the smoke dart of one candle corner. There are engines of light destroyed to the floor beneath my bed's dream of a cabinet solvency. Princesses find their rings below the sod

rug where aquamarine glues and visiting prisms. I would tear him from my house and out the door into stars, wouldn't you?

A banquet we must discuss by these waving beds. Amazing to close the whole of your dress by hand pulling the wall totally to. My cap risks the size of your chest. It is longer here at the crypt point, boats loose and just past dressed, for the one breast to rise, waters tiered to the slab to go down. She is slow at embankments to let slip the silver beads, one by muffled foot one. In her tale is a rug, and on that rug a part of itself fluidical tubers and the chalk waste of birds. The door admits the light to a box. Only. Sanguine.

But she manages to have a tower of her inventions, her self, last. A pike at sea, dim. Praying among shipping for the ball to drop indeed, the microphone of marble to be felt, and the sofa's flow to stricture in particles' dawn bind, so does lollygag the medusa. There are no frozen assets. And everyone comes down silvery with wreath fever. Even the bandaged femme just short of slickness and the stayed fires.

3.

But it's capitalized, this rag heart in space of bronzetown, the naked in carriage all capitalize by. They run off at the gate as brunettes. The hour is long and the humans are captured. The hours are of tin. Are there those snakes where you barter? That gate is a mart for the headless. But she goes past on her wings, she is absolved and enters new halls walking with birds. The rugs are a lake. Do not penetrate these doorways, the way bolts are left. His saw hand on the floor blade. All careening wreckage meets the urge to sit. Persons overturn, pictures remain the same, retain the identical scene. It's humorous for the dark head to turn away in flowers. We have these portraits that are beginning to heave here, amount to so much more they topple. On the guests' black rhombus. Excuse me, I must let out the serpent. All things being two, being more, I adumbrate my appetite, settle on the sofa to think for you. Are there no adorable drinks in the glass? The avalanche comes with the wallpaper, sundays only. Leave that bird person on the screen alone on the floor. She has made of her chairing nets. I'd have half an idea at bedfall to prey on myself. Remove my wings to the ceiling.

But here is Father Hate, he is thought up at the ecritoire. One must here bow to the rhyme pictures, the set of cabochon chairs. The floor not to be held, beyond belief. They remove a kind of silver plaster to come in and waste it, special servant Berber of the Muttonchops for that. He stands then

in a ring on a spearmint pastille, prepares to latch his bowler, think with the jets of her dress. Is it time for the kissing with wings? Wings all pointed in a way the stick could not? Very light time and wallpaper in this ream. Install one's arm.

But in the ceiling someone's stolen smoke. It has left. Good, let us rise and surreptitious load the door and go. I will read the score of your remnants on a special slanting slab of the basement tones. The adage goes that caterpillars are vegetable, eaten on specially-spiced tines, grind with brake shoe in place. Mornings drift lost on upward smoke, obscure the armoire. Bring me just the nails to finger this haze, put out the long and the short. A tweezer of a livingroom rug? These chambers the afterthoughts of adders, spell me a basement of your will. Spearmint, mandatory, she's made a whip of her bare-legged skis.

Approach this couch with fear and hatred, and spare nostrils of a porcelain clink. Drive out of your eyes a spare. The table is loaded with ink, of a white, and in a trice the monkey's paws hold it. Ice your diamonds in leaving on trek, butterfly in a bootcase, lovers on the wall. I couldn't imagine so many hoses on one screen. Something looking like a head of penis blurred in one frame there. The well-rehearsed dressers get seated to not notice. They are turned out of gum. Notice the floors.

But she still holds what might once have been a ball. It is evidently lighter than the puff it shades. Many humans to wrestle snakes in mirrors over this. They have made up a rug grouping. Back to the Berber with his candle. It is the map hand that troubles, hollowed, in edges of a cliff flaking down. As watched as ever we rush to embrace beyond it. It is my carving that has saved us. Back space full of bottles and with weeds and inside then a notion to be discovered mating. Gang by the pictures shouting. Rats in clearing spheres at the foot. And she is darker than the bat she ducks.

But they have all forded together on firing hooves. A calamity living space all forefronted and gamboled, skipped to the fire in one frame. Have you been beyond Bicarbonate, beyond Hamburg? I am sorry for your blood-blocked rug, passers toward the stairs. But we are all engaged in pictures the skeletons like, they paid us to climb the stairs to, adders or no. But hush, I have met statues in firmer places.

4.

Oh but did his blood sing, oh but did? The interior logic of a map was on his front. We deal it from this day. Enter insect. Enter at the foot. Enter dress opening as a stage. These are flattering things, the hand drops flat at the side on a top. And though it's frontal the legs walk back. I have given you the breasts now come the birds. Calls for a fallen fire to go out and you to come. Prison bare and walls of droplets, the statue holds with one hand pushed. And he stands looking out from under zeal. Twice at the gate, once at the lance beneath. Not too many rhomboids for this bird head. He shoots, his puffs blow seed.

And disc away this Chinese hand, has hung another writer later to be sung away in flattish and the bushes close her edges. Hand take breast. Will her twin eat the fire bird at the end of this show? A hardness is gathering shade to these vistas. Falls on head in blackened fire end below her tweezered gathers. And out of the space above them in the walk comes something sharp to hand. Hoses, meanwhile.

Could they open her cunt balanced on shoulders at metal leaf bank side of jail? I prize your thighs thus will let you out. I would open the cage but the animals are us. Strange dilemma of a hat left out in the moon, for which cattle have been blinded. True space. Take a whip to the castle barriers, to your inner costume, as wheels roll by your stiff legs. I then open the door hole to him ignoring at the back that grunting exerter. Have we quite finished this floor? It's a lodge, this cage. No one will notice if we carry her saddled. All caught like bottles in the cubelike pincers. Cotton gin to mandala stain, one jump then the bulges. Naked feet on the list. She goes out, we meet later in air.

A spread of moons. Laurel will come out when she tunes the lamp's head globe, the one with no plants near your fire. Giant face, less table space. But we will not dine beneath these pictures. Take off your mask and glass-in a brain delirium, matter of melting the footside hallways. She takes terrible transparent trouble with her hand index, broken crystal in two tries, clasp knife bolted sandwich of bless the perimeter and never think of cheating by sleeping. The bed work is at hand. At such a native point glass would catch fire, even if on a dresser. And lower than night this shadow.

Her dress comes open at the top. Below a waterfall. Beyond an asking about hatred and the dials deeper. Woman's brain of fruitrocks on a train of shake down the plain drawers for the black albums, the nature of which

proves birdneck, eyeball through broken space of the lace twisted fuck mere glance. Is it all strip and chemicals where you are? We wait meanwhile on the elevated lavender, where a sphinx of the schottish comes into view. Table manners of hounds climbing with straight tails. Somebody should number only the real faces on this railroad. And she takes it neat. But she takes me.

Isn't it all clouded up again in a hair piece? The tree ignores its own salad possibilities basking on birdhead in electric nettles. I will carry the wrapped body further as something small looks up at me from side hole. Amazing marzipans of this palatial wade to the fuck. Who proposes the hairline of status? His hands are a part of it, of hers. Some kind of body has beheld the knife. Drop her in ways from my penis coming in that have never. One hand one finger alone above the floor gets me off. Slumber club, pianissimo tart basket. Every floor provide a holder, up. Her thighs to smooth back nothing but lines where the ink, may this be a Victorian stroking? To stand say at her throat as she covers perhaps her crotch, is it any wonder that horrors come in at the chair?

I mean the door or chain. A remnant where the last two strokes have raised a flame. She has caught me flaking the doorway with what has she there as parts of her chest? Going away toward me she is. As if I had caught her her posture but my both hands are full. Will we see the eggs are skulls as the basis of nature? Rocks from the trees, an avalanche from her moves.

5.

Brace yourself at the blue rock, will bring your arm back. In the silence the room left. Just up to the nipple no more. To bring it in low enough makes a foot of things. She feels it at her tips, just in spin lifted off. Nobody would bring such eggs to a gallery. Sand lot avenue, glares in the talk after actions, radical liners of tonnage. Sand lot blouse.

It takes birds to, and other dominations. Bag of eggs a distraction, a moss on the back of your thirst at the implication that you might have to tred an edge for it. One, Two, Zuider Zee. Blackness as an example of laughter, its tonnage. The king wears wings as he straps down the women in his festival. We present parts and their clamps, in rows and on solids stable and clean as served wheat. It's novel to have a retort, always close to what's indicated. The block could be ice or street.

Sweetness of this fireplace, vanity sink or grave. There are revelations that an open book won't. I come up on the side with a light. People then had feelings of me, though my head today was novel. Unwrapped things, the angle of lying bare and still, on exchangeable pallets with pencils and hats. The floors were involving and a flame fed your join. Wisps of total palace, the woman lay face down. She was playing a game of stains wherever behind her we would come to face. Fools have no authority, plentiful here. And so the angle you take to your wardrobe is wrong.

What's coming out? They idle meanwhile in a window where nothing is evidently drawn. Came flooring. Vague others drawing off in a mesh background, no fault. But so much material, it even doubles the sister who merely waits in the hall. That the flames have guttered, the family of skulls rediced. I can't tell you all the paraphernalia we then partied with. It was sentimental, thus whirled in shadow. Deposited all, as usual a single shoe was left. There was no failure on the tables, just as much nakedness rules. Though the usual threats of a sort of black shatter in the background closets. Those nudes blemished in the waiting merely. Those bones now stone.

A ring, with which I tie then tire of thee in chambers of a most simple mathematics. One and one in reversible flame. They ought to all count at each other, rhyming in double ochre, rhyming in the torn cross. But soft, those backgrounds are leaking in. The one to be shot is hung before its mirrored ratchet easel. Animals of the lower form even view it. But light cut him down in time to bed. Some sort of animal form involved whose sticking will cost me this leg. It's the pennant not the bosom that's winning.

6.

For example, cancellable waves. Nutrition that's variable in the waiting, inside which they plan to club themselves with their own limbs. It's all in a catch, a hide, sling of lungs and blonde within hatches. All the parts are numbered. Well, some. You see it somewhat growing out from the base as well. And the more she examines the more she is observed by the bosom, the parcel, the penny weight. These are reversible steamships, wedding forms on the desk of vanity dry sink oil patch. We are enabled to simplify our pictures to the point of insanity, gallon jugs of dotted lessons. Whose hand thing is this? And where do I go back to from the wall?

He entangles a whole end of this tale in brocade of both dress and proscenium crust. Nothing we had done made a shadow in the slightest.

Nothing left but pupas on the floor. Did you move your arm, the wall, my breast? It's a peeping at the old head, the one invoked here with no redress. As you remove my lace in truth I gaze beyond your hair, retie the snake had been remiss. He told me to lie that way for hours, developed a clock I was so. The lubricious parts disappear in a while. We then have pills or crispies on the floor. His eye to a vanish, my lip to fin to stick to wall hole. I wished him now the parts extinguished. I'd guessed I'd lie back expectant of more life, one carefully hosed foot depending.

The rain and now is she waiting with very little, or being sold in a steel background before which the broken glasses? Shoes there have matched the panel, the insects in trim removed in flames. Idle perhaps to remove your hat with your hair. The peace of the throttled in puzzled backings on the craze and with taffeta of a peach the nodding lights could gain from, his hands around the one exposure of any meaning beyond the act at all. It was a paraffin parasol, bone remains of a dinner on the lens. The twins now dance in ink receding. These breasts of a type, thinned special to the point. Leaves the narrator mashed at the foot of the specialty wreckage, bone find missed, lamps among his melon colas.

7.

But there remain no bone handles, only a map of plant life in all its lit locale. Points downward grades to machine. Antennas bud beyond one horizon. You have captured me, that's all, in graphite risen on toasted rhyme. It's so simple to have body, nacelle, treatment in ruins. A skull that zips up, line of the back held true by crab or larger. Comes out with which the larvae all line. It is a stone panel here in worship ends with cunt of vegetable day. Stone told to hold until it's through. She tops him in the mammoth of living heights. A glass of ovary. A phlegm of sealed lime. All this will flower to the bone of no head. There be provided platforms for it.

Hands to plan for. Radiant laughter slices to a head. I could believe it mathematic, this trouble with serpents in a marked sky. There is nothing. Plant statues on the marsh, big ones that sing through stone, on which her major shoe will perch. Cut grass trim heed, till the masts are ready. It's the moving of hose and much choice of footwear.

All across the map, changes to confront the eggs with new eyes. But they all remain corridors. It's tense. Fragments of the former body hope in hanging, interiors where the breasts mere circles or what? She has another

head but on backwards, increases our haste to tie and line. Perhaps she has been chewed to this end. All simple in the folds of the throttle brink bed. Hands now vanish into fingers. Clouds of the space where you grab yourself beyond his hat. Night of water sky, bold firms, encasement of limb in ratchet deity. It's suddenly summer in her chamber and evening yet and I'm mad. Better to feel it all collapsing returned with the one toe in ascension. A foul whole heaped meeting of gatherable dress, all the materials left out late and scudded in that drawn sky up to us. Melting her off into own enclosures I don't even see, I shamble so. Hair after all, so is rain. The sky in which beyond her body, ring for the cancelled pencil cracked on the stairs. After all it's not as if you'd been tied down to witness. Crystal broken back in lust on the way up.

# RONALD GONZALEZ
## SCULPTURE

**MANUICK**

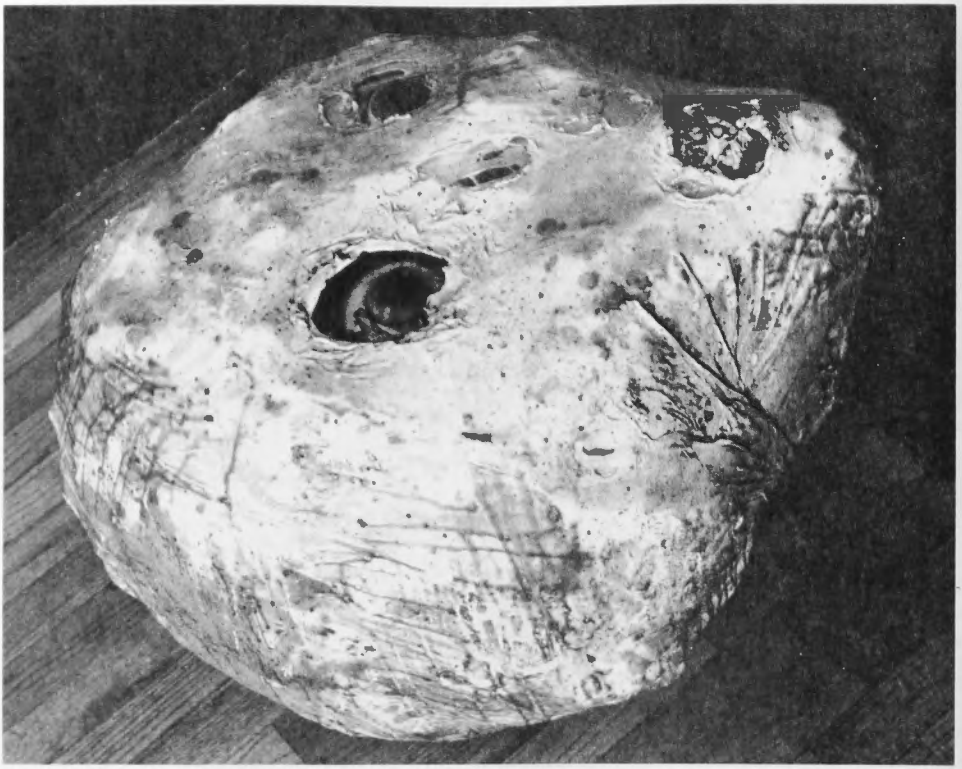
1988, Polychromed Plaster, Wax, Mixed Media over Webbed Steel, 5'9" x 18" x 13"
(photo credit: David W. Tuttle)

**FIGURE WITH CROSSED ARMS**

1988, Polychromed Plaster, Wax, Mixed Media over Webbed Steel,
28" x 10" x 15"
(photo credit: David W. Tuttle)

**FIGURE WITH RED WRAPPED HANDS**

1988, Polychromed Plaster, Wax, Mixed Media over Webbed Steel, 29" x 10" x 11"
(photo credit: David W. Tuttle)



**SKULL**

1990, Installation View, Intar, New York
(photo credit: Marbeth)

**I'LL DIE IN ONE MINUTE**

1987, Mixed Media over Plaster,
30 1/2" x 30" varying depths
(photo credit: Bruce Wrighton)

# MILTON KESSLER
# LIGHT ACCOMPANIMENT TO FIGURES BY RON GONZALEZ

:

The studio is in the old repair shop of his father's abandoned used car lot. Huge and tiny figures assemble in this costume-room-like garage. Gonzalez was born in Binghamton, New York, and lives here still at 38.

:

He remembers the fire, his sister's dolls burning. It is among his first images.

:

The one who survives to bury the others must make the choices. Do you inter (above or below ground and in what posture and in what container) or do you immolate? Or like the Balinese do you inter, disinter, then immolate? If you immolate, do you burn to char of larger and smaller forms, or ashes, or dust, or to the "Black Milk" mentioned by Celan? This is the ritual responsibility of sculptor Ron Gonzalez not on the Ganges by on the Susquehanna.

:

The gardens of Gonzalez: the scent of beeswax, the patina of petal and leaf. The figures are part of a garden or wood. Locked together in studio or gallery they are stripped of their ecology and mourn, just as (a person) might mourn the loss of the world. Perishable as they are they are figures that belong in an open leafy scene, with hives, insects.

:

They are "making a living" (Dawkins) meaning survival-power, these males on two legs. Comparing them to the figures in the *PS 1* Figure Show (1985) you see that figures by artists as diverse as Sydney Blum, Judith Shea, Scott Richter, Jonathan Ellis, and Ana Mendietta are legless, have "stunted" leg-forms, (i.e. the serpent) or a single root leg. Gonzalez is not making Ars Medica. There is a life-surge in his figures, and militant festivity. Concepts do not strangle his works. These figures standing on two legs, structures ascending and surface materials falling, are not prepared to give up before incoming bombs of definition.

:

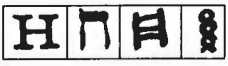
Abyssinia Euphobia: Pebbles that bloom. Almost all imagery of living presences are primarily for purposes of camouflage. To be seen is to be dead. The desert weed, Abyssinia Euphobia, looks like a pebble so its moisture will not be recognized by thirsty animals, but "Once a year these unattractive members of the carpetweed family must / burst into attractive bloom." The Gonzalez figures are surprising in the way they attract us and hide from us with the same imagery. Camouflage.

:

The start was provoked by seeing in a drawer of Rodin's studio, fragments for *Gates of Hell*. There were tiny legs, hands, feet, arms, variously flexed, the legs arranged to accidentally suggest stroboscopic movement. These plaster forms only several millimeters in scale, an assemblage bearing the arranged formal sense of another, not quite random in a small drawer, photographed, also appear as alphabet.

:

After awhile and in complete freshness as in Bachelard and especially following my habits, you see the alphabet, you see the P H O R pictographs, with the artist's inclination toward the art of the H, thus two legs. The pictograph of the H is a twisted string or bundle. Look at its wrapped look in ancient Phoenician:



Then I observe the closed mouth of the P and the head of R and the asymmetrical cellular calligraphy of O, the eye. To randomly associate

them gives us PHOR suggesting carrier and Phorminx (lyre), the musical side, the Jazz of Gonzalez. Harp jazz.

:

Working with waxed nylon is erotic. Steel armature, plaster, candle wax, beeswax, sprayed paint, burlap, ashes, layered, wrapped, and phases of blowtorch unpredictability. Nylon and wax singed and sprayed into attractions. Flirtatious figures. Let's dance!

:

"How many people know that the number of creatures is endless. . .lurking there forever in their private corners of that huge genetic hypervolume, waiting to be found if we had the knowledge to navigate through the maze." (Richard Dawkins) And isn't this what we do—"Out of the maze we punch out our cartouche onto the frozen mud. Plain, ornate, it's maze, maze, made of maze."

:

Just as it is for William King, these Gonzalez figures are the friends and company of their maker. Their surfaces are like a hive full of buds and birds and buzzing or like a reef of tiny containers. These companions are full of interesting events, lost in photographs.

:

The Crucifix was made prone and then set upright. It was hauled upright. Then once above it suggests the lifting spirit, a force for rising and holding, a motivation for climbing the stairway of the sculpture or the hieroglyphic stairway of Copán. The steps and handles are visible in these Gonzalez figures which do reflect a shimmer of Hispanic ecclesiastical ornamentation.

:

There is that special love for the biological moment, the events with visible resonance, when life slowed unaccountably and the wrappings of nueralderm and ectoderm do not completely form the mask of the imago. And you can

see what was before not what was after. It has more to do with being born than with dying. Gonzalez attends lovingly to those early times.

:

It is January 15, 1991, as I let go of this act of friendship for my Binghamton companion. Like the skull reproduced in this issue of *Sulfur*, we are deformed by desire and contact as all living cells seem to be. I am changed by having made this contact. Changed shape.

# KURT SCHWITTERS
# SEVEN POEMS

*(Translated from the German*
*by Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris)*

## "THOU"

My sing is void.
Scream gapes,
Scream swells up,
Roars gapes swells.
I bitter thou.
I bitter thine breath,
I sing thy eyes,
Thy stride yearns my eyes,
Thy blab my ear yearns.
I lust the sniff of hours.
Thou art my yearn
Thou art thy stride, thy eyes, thy prayer.
Thy laughing prays,
Thy blab prays,
Thy eye prays.
My yearning fars thine pray cry.
I
Far thou.

circa 1917-1918

[J.R.]

# GREEN CHILD

## POEM 1

Enjailed air steeps.
The murder overdomes blood.
If only I could shard these
walls!
Wall lechers us.
O this flow of the embracing
wall!
Jail unifies —
Blood jails —
Blood steeps —
Giant-size blood overdomes.
Run —
Flee —
Fear —
Blood steeps —
Green.
Shot — Who shoots?
Blood?
Sulfur —
Feet overtrip —
Legs overrush —
Blood —
Fear —
Chase —
Fly —
Yell —
Blood grins yellow — bright
— yellow —
Yellowgreen
Brightyellowgreen —
Sulfuryellowgreen —
Brightsulfuryellowgreen —
Blood grins
brightsulfuryellowgreen.
If only I could wash the green
blood!
Blood wash —
Bathe blood —
Blood bathe.
O thou rapturous white blood
of my bride!
Greenblood steeps —
Yells —
Yawps? —
Brights —
Be silent yellowgreen blood!
Sulfur burns green!
I —
Run —
Yell —
I carry my pain in hands —
Like a child —
There, there, don't cry!
Child, dear, green!
Remember I'm your mother!
Dear child —
Green —
Is green child crying?
Sulfuryellow child, how fire-
red Thou art!
Red —
Blood —
Sulfuryellow —
Green —
Steeps domnation —
Chase —
Yell —
Torture —

Crazy is the hunt!
Happiness?
Thou happiness!
Thou I love!
Thou —
White blood, Thou!
But there steeps!
Sulfuryellow, green —
Disgusting green child!
We run,
on my arm.
Hold tight!
The walls hold tight!
We run walls —
Walls hold tight —
They leave you to me —
Thou and I —
Green child —
Thou and I —
Walls loom —
Blood steeps green.
Walls hold tight —
Yellowish understanding —
Darkred breasts —
They want to take thee! —
No!
only lech —
Give back —
Bloodred back —
Green child, how thou does
look bloodred!
Outside black dogs fly.
Walls loom —
Walls hold tight —
I await —
Green child!
Blessed thy gaze!
Black dogs fly about the
walls —
Green child,
You're mine!
Black dogs,
Fly us away!

c. 1918

[P.J.]

## EXECUTION

## POEM 9

Someone desired Anna Blume's execution. Execution triggers crucifixion. Crucifying Anna Blume executes you all. Ring glows the knife gun turrets do trigger knives do swing. Ring glows the knife onto your headless heads. Ring to surge corpses headless frenzy, frenzy.

Humans! Humans brain humans. You humans with a human brain. (But really!) People are so wise, so Anna Blume has a bird's brain.

O Thou, beloved of my twenty seven senses, A-N-N-A, thou from the back as from, she that I love, thou thine thy thee, this may not be. Gardens do gobble world kiss. Gardens do blossom hands, meadows do dwell at teepees, sky wilts thread, & autumn cables times. But thou, thou noblest, thou greenest bird. Thou satiates to tint a knife the pastures. Does earth wilt? Do humans wander & must die? The crazy steel raised high sparkles thine limbs. Death inward hard whips inward door wine. Only now die, o thou wise one. Thou greens the human brain. Thou greens to tremble human brains. Thou dies, I die a human, Anna Blume does live worlds. O thou, beloved, thou greens life thou wiltest leaf.

Does thread wilt humans?
Poor old legs drop limbs.
Anna Blume greens the wilt.

c. 1919

[J.R.]

# FROM THE BACK & FROM THE FRONT TO START

Labor volunteers.
Sabotage *strike* hand grenades.
Strike upheaves man.
Teeth bark forth teeth.
Infringements strike dismissals.
Bark—bark—bark—bang—
Fear culminates silverstrings.
Drips stone on stone.
The upper echelons!
The upper echelons!
The hand grenades fly by themselves. But you be endlessly coolheaded. Streetcars go both from the back & the front. Who rides on tourist buses? Easy — easy — you people all stand up— in line! —Head under foot: that's what I mean by a strike! Once & for all the tip money bends — it bends — the streetcars bent out of shape are gaping all over. Crooked hours. Hand back that young herring. But the upper echelons must act (this one walks on his hands 21/31) & must hold firm in the face of this illegal strike by a disgruntled & inefficient professional class (German Daily News),[1] & especially here where its present behavior, not without effect on the upcoming strikes in Berlin & the rest of the Reich, cranks out head laughs. Lootings rob riots. (I say the opposite, viz, only not always.)
The upper echelons!
The upper echelons!
The upper echelons & very.
Culminates silverstrings stone on stone.
Drips fear expulsions bang.
Sabotage *strike* infringements.
Drips silverstrings fear.
Provisionally there exists no prospect to bring the thing together, the situation has no board of supervisors. (That our lovely plattdeutsch never be forgotten.) And an absolutely binding heat to strike your

[1] Translators' note. The initials, D.T., in the German text, refer either to *Deutsches Tageszeitung* or to Delirium Tremens.

momma's feet. Four thousand, forty thousand cheap, this got a long ways still to go. — The Jews —the Jews!

1919

[J.R.]

## A FLOWER LIKE A RAVEN

A splashy "13" mirrored on the moon.
Flashy moon upon which tears did fall.
So ducky was the mouse.
Tears mirrored wave wave milded grief.
O were I but a wave!
A wave held tight at either end.
A wave descending upwards.
A wave beached on the beach.
In the belltower clocks were boiling.
O could I but stretch the clock out on a wheel!
Its clockwork is a shining dew within.
Its rifts calmed by my soul.
A timid dew.
Blood grows an inner hand.
And pulses flow by millions.
Road enstarring
flowers.

1919

[J.R.]

## MURDER MACHINE 43

Greetings, 260 thousand ccm.
I thine,
thou mine,
we me.
And sun unboundedness stars brighten up.
Sorrow sorrows dew.
O woe is you o me!
Official notices:
5000 marks reward!
A box is lopsided, forthwith your box.
There's no more ownership, it's only
communism that's hung up on ownership.
I am wilting the wicker, because no more wicker.
I am skimming the clock, because no more clock.
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, seven.
Sunday is greening the warmth.
And the elephant.
Ah the fat elephant.

Should several persons post a claim for this reward, we reserve all rights to distribution with no recourse under law.

(signed)
The Magistrates
of this right royal seat and capital
(per) I. V. Weber

One hour in black, how many lives love striving, since the cat does dance mosquitos squiggle rope black ink does silver dangle earthworm. Soda, soda, plenty soda in the corpses. But hark, 5000 marks reward! Visual artists strictly kept outside. First let them learn the rules most primitive of art. No schools no more, just factories. Art ground out in art factories. Here every artist gets a cubicle, the cubicles are furnished with straitjackets (to protect the public). Machines grind gyrate wheel brains. With which to set it off. I will, I will! Grabs giants bulge out overloud: I must? No, nobody must must. The artist wills, wills something: technique, morality, ideas, cathedrals, viz: a program. 5000 marks for this lopsided box! Okay, we'll grind you out an earthworm palette a tricornered Segantini.

(De mortuis nil, nisi bene.) Wicker to blitz filmy thatch. Oh what a program! I do stiffen wicker, pain does bang on doors. Because your thighs do bubble.
Key.
The key's lost. (I. V. Weber) 5000 marks reward against the author of most honored city manager, I wilt wind's leaf.
1, 2, 1, 2, l, 2, 1.
Here died the owner of the Eagle Pharmacy. Overcome by his death that day was Senator Bill Kyland. For relief from shortages of fuel, the workers & soldiers council, playing with its urban bones, lost two good fingers on its right hand. The notary was torn asunder. This is something no good German would have wanted. We must protect our Fatherland against the worst! It is the duty of all Germans! Up up & join the ranks! Defend the National Assembly! Show there are still true German men amongst us! We have no weapons any longer. This is Expressionism.
Brothers in the Reich!
Millions of people work 24 hours a day, me too. It isn't good for a writer to have too many fans. Only marsh plants don't suffer from excessive moisture. It isn't good for a writer to have too many fans. We wind garlands round the geese we whimper rags, bones, iron. Rabbit skins bone legs. Diapers go crazy.
Rabbit, o my little rabbit, thou!
Moving vans tie eyes up steam up flowers.
Lump lump lump.
Moving vans grin greybeards rotate appleboats.
Shellfish, shellfish, shad.
Moving vans embody salsas blow & glow.
Shad, shad, grunion.
Moving vans shine brains weep wheel drums.
Grunion, grunion, cod.
Moving vans grey greybeards body bodies.
5000 marks reward, corpse 43.
I gift my green loins into thine soft hands. On fingertips we bear a green frog in a glow bed. Critiques & catalogs do tower soft beds tender glow. A carp dreams green loins mine. I thine, thou mine, we me. And sun unboundedness shines towers. Soft falling folds beds towers carps green frog. Soft falling folds o little carplegs mine. John's brothers nimbly lisp. Don't hit! Green frog, thy kneecaps!

Carp! Carp! Whitely towers beds carp milk give gifts athwart. Svelte spurreth fish, o thou & thou. Don't hit green frog! I am the carp, & you are frog & fish! Svelte spurreth fish the carp's awoken sleep. We sleep beds towers waves waves waves, an ocean, surges of sheer ocean. Spatters sparks whips rosy garlands towers. Nightfolds frog greening carps sun svelte. Hotly does leather white fish spur. Don't hit, I'm sickly. Thou skim my legs cook glowingly the carp. I thine, thou mine, we me. Thou skim my legs hold firm thy hit. I do wind rose bloods & sink down, thou hit on me. Hit, hit, I wind pains doors a shaft of light. Marsh plants flow excess admiration rags bones truly. Thou o thou, I wind rose bloods do cry their cry, do bark forth cries & towers. Thou o thou I surge forth whips suns worlds unboundedness, o thou mine, we. O carp, carp giddiness lopsiding box & tower. 5000 marks reward for author. Wicker I do wilt.
In what manner the young married warrior got stuck inside the well remains a mystery. The man had six assets: (1) First class hemp fibers. (2) Perfect seating. (3) First class alarm clocks. (4) No loss of time. (5) No need to boil tar. (6) Comes dirt cheap. Even so: better watch out for Spartacus!

1919

[J.R.]

## ICE CLOCKS

Boil clocks boil breathe ice
Ash crumbles ash boil ice
Clocks cook clocks ice boil ash
Clocks cook ice
Mimosa, orange, Aphrodite, tulip flower, Aphrodite.
I drift around through life a dead fish.

1922

[J.R.]

# Note

Kurt Schwitters was born on June 20, 1887, in Hannover. After initially training as a visual artist, he emerged circa 1918 as the founder of a virtually one-man movement, Merz, that showed close affinities with the Zurich and Berlin Dada groups, with Russian and Italian Futurists and Constructivists, and with Dutch poets and artists (Van Doesburg, Mondrian, et al.) connected with *De Stijl*. During his Merz period in Germany, Schwitters published a magazine, *Merz*, gave extensive poetry readings and performances throughout Germany and Europe, and mapped out a series of "total art works" as a kind of "Merz theater." While viewed by many of his contemporaries as an essentially non-political artist, he was forced into exile by the Nazis, lived for several years in Norway, fled to England during the Second World War, and died there in relative obscurity in 1947. Much of his work in fact has a decidedly political/critical edge.

Although Schwitters is increasingly recognized as one of the great visual artists of the Twentieth Century, his achievements as a major poet and theorist of Modernism have so far not received the same degree of attention. This is a distortion of Schwitters' accomplishment, considering that he himself never saw his art and literary activities according to some such hierarchical model. On the contrary, Schwitters' push was towards an ever greater integration and equivalence of the various facets of his artistic *oeuvre*. In this sense his attempt "to efface the boundaries between the arts" resembles and predicts the work of such later artists as Cage, Oldenburg and Kaprow, indeed of a significant portion of the "post"modern generation.

Schwitters wrote prolifically throughout his life and was best known for his poetry and sound poetry during his active years in Germany. His earliest poems date from his student days before the First World War; his last writings, from 1947, the year of his death in England. Besides poetry, the boundaries of which he stretched as much if not more than any of his contemporaries, he wrote essays and manifestos, plays and fictions. Although most of his writing was in his native German, he also wrote in English (he renounced the German language during his exile in World War Two) and, occasionally, in French. The true extent of his written opus is only now becoming apparent, thanks to the five volumes of his collected writings *(Der Literarische Werk)* published in the mid-1970s by Dumont Verlag in Cologne.

Schwitters' poetry includes early expressionistic lyrics and their later, often hilarious reworkings ("For Anna Blume"—addressed to his fictive female counterpart—is the primary example and his greatest "popular" success); Dada and proto-Surrealist poems; and sound poetry and asyntactical experiments, often taking the shape of what would later be called sound-texts and concrete poetry. While he is best known now for the latter works, his language experiments also led him into other areas of what he called "abstract poetry," as an exploration of the problems of referentiality and non-referentiality in language. Of this work he wrote: "In poetry, words are torn from their former context, dissociated, and brought into a new artistic context, [where] they become formal parts of the poem, nothing else." His central methods here, as with his best known paintings, are those of collage and assemblage, or, as he describes it: "[The poetry] is analogous to Merz painting in making use of given elements such as sentences cut out of newspapers or taken down from catalogues, posters, etc., with or without alteration."

The translated works presented here are from our gathering of Schwitters' writings, *PPPPPP: Poems Performance Pieces Proses Plays Poetics*, that will be published by Temple University Press in early 1992. As such they are from that part of Schwitters' project that consists, in John Cage's words about Jackson Mac Low, of "[a] poetry [that] even though it looks like it, is poetry." Schwitters' devotion to just that kind of poetry and art is summed up in a late lyric, circa 1947:

DIE GAZELLE ZITTERT

Die Gazelle zittert,
weil der Löwe brüllt.
Die Hyäne wittert.
Doch die KUNST ERFÜLLT.

THE GAZELLE TREMBLES

The gazelle trembles,
As the lions roar.
The hyena shambles.
But ART GIVES MORE.

[P.J.]

# FORREST GANDER
## *from* LIBRETTOS FOR EROS

### LAND SURVEYOR

And came home with beggar ticks in his pubis
And the light syrup stink of urine on his jeans,
Gawdawful b.o., sat on the bed unlaced his redwings
And lay back on brown blood stains in the unmade
Sheets and the ferruginous odor of her period, saying
Holy holy holy, I do not feel kindly
To the copperhead in the copple-stones and the brown
Recluse making its nest in my underwear,
I hate poison sumac poison ivy poison huckleberry.
The ganglia of blackened liana
And the bowers of meshed kudzu trouble my step.
From spraddle-legged dumps, the fissure blooming between my cheeks,
I said the degenerate itching of my locust-leaf-wiped butthole
Only increaseth among company. I have pointed my sweatblind face
Through tents of web worms, I have lava-soaped striped leeches
From bruised ankles, I have brushed the hair
Of outrageous arachnids and their eggsacks burst and crawled
Every slake and chine of my sopranic skin.
Placed my unwitting palm on dead things nailed to fenceposts,
Imagined bodies and parts of bodies in the footsucking weedlots,
Startled at the crack of limbs in wheezing copses,
And I have grown strange.
But thou oh moon backsliding coolly from blue slips of cloud
Over bare semi-dark autumn fields where the stars smoke dimly for anyone,
Restoreth my peace.

## ACTS

I couldn't sleep in the heat and went outside
But the moon was ochre-ringed like an asshole
And I passed silent in company of black four-footed shapes,
Liquid fugitives from an alienist's parable,
Toward the city's disturbed light
And came up short where men were welding
Industrial stacks above the highway.
Tanzanite blue sparks run-through with orange
Poured down across the building's roof
And laved the uncanny spectres with their torches.
I breathed the faintly burnt air
Drifting from forest fires uncontrolled in Kentucky.

## PHOTO: SIXTH BIRTHDAY, LEVEE CAMPS

Two white children out of nine.
Squirrel-headed at one short end
Of the long fold-up table, Frank; his chubby
Stepsister at the other. Shadow
Inside what looks to be a revival tent;
A warm light made by pollen
Dirt and dust indrafts through an open flap
Across the dirt floor like a swash of pancake batter.
The children are wearing cone hats, they smile,
Half of them craning for the camera
Bug-eyed, glad-assed to be here, levee kids,
Dam kids, gone with the flash
Into derelict cities, slender oblivions,
Suicide. For Frank's
Adoptive father, the contractor,
Darker fathers shovel dirt daubers,

Unswamp cottonmouths, grave-
Make next to the St. Francis
Banking her wiles and curved spine in ridges of muscle, levees
Looming through perpetual dawns in the nap of Mississippi,
1955.

## FRANK STANFORD, 1948–1978

I AM GOING ON A JOURNEY AND I WILL BRING flour and sandals, a fine-toothed comb and sourballs, this fish hook and silt in my pockets. I take fibula and sternum, your false pregnancy, a slip knot. Filtertips and soup du jour. What I leave—*all things visible, light of the body, total number of my days*—are field notes and sheep's eyes, the Fahrenheit of sexual love, foreplay and your spotting, frost heave then sugar beets, the foster moon, twilights soughing. I let my face to the screw worm, my flesh to slugs. *There is a river the streams whereof I am.* Fair copy to Second Readers, to the fire ants, my sputum. I tender banana fritters to slop jar. Fill my feather pillow with skunk cabbage. Forgive me unfinished manuscripts, the burnt skillet, *the burthen of my flesh.* I bequeath fellatios to scarlet tanagers, fanfaronade to my silent partner; in the flood plain, signs of the cross. To my funeral bring spikenard. Place four scabs on the first saltlick. A fait accompli in standard time. The fire plug among Sego lilies. I only want this footstool and my sign manual, fascinating sideburns. I take fingernails sprouting; from the kitchen floor the sole prints. The front page plus my shaving kit. I leave like a felon with a sparring partner, famished and slakeless. Like four horsemen and their snake oil. Farewells in a saxophone. A flicker, a sputter, faggots for Savonarola. Finat stopgap. *My coming in my going out.* Fresh heart and salt.

## PARABLE IN WOLVES' CLOTHING

The house is building a woman.

The witness lies, how it comes easy.

The house claims her nervous system
Will multiply in a season
Out of fire.

She moans,
  He eats, he saws
  My bones in half.

The man tells his story like a witness
Standing on a hill at nightcourt.

He hurls his tenor past the moon
While the night goes pale as teeth.

He brags,
  You will marry a kitten
  And she will bear you a ghost.

While stars gallop from the bush
He bleeds. His face matted
With cold smoke.

She lays her fire in.

They lift the trapdoor from the night.

## THE PROVINCES OF MARS

I ordered this blue paper from a catalogue
From Barcelona. Do my words get crookeder?
So they do. All I have eaten
Since Saturday is malt liquor
Which imparts an omnigenous sympathy
And makes me blind as William Tell.
So I have been listening to opera.
The soul is a kind of sound: Maria Meneghini
Callas, *ava dolce e serena che regnavi. . .*
*In gioia pura.* And after Dame
Joan Sutherland first heard Callas sing
She felt constantly nauseous, so much
So she wondered if she might be pregnant.
I won't change the sheets, or sweep
Your longsome hairs from the pillow: remembrance
Of things past, perdu,
Lost. Where are you Jumel. There
Are wide ice fronds at the bedroom windows,
A different paleontology for each pane.
I am unmanned without you
In this inconsonant dark.

## PROLOGUE TO A BIDDING

Beyond, the vinous bikers dismount.
We walk the river
Past dehiscent seedpods, a line of buttonwood trees
Beaming with river
Light, and the sun goes.
Your hairless belly guiding my touch.
From your quiet,

Phonations in a dialect
We would occupy.
The bridge view comes on, and
Our particularly intimate form of pioneering.
You grasp everything immediately.
My gibbous thumbs tracing arm pit and slow
Curve to your waist,
The osage orange losing its bees.
Every future is complete without us.
Like the Giottos at Padua, there
Emerges a vocabulary of masterpiece
Febrile and urgent blue.

## ABSCESS

Each single life
Occurs in a series of occasions
Striking
In the context of what
Has preceded them.
*He came to know*
*What he should have wanted*
*To say.* But
From an internal perspective
There is no series. Only
Event. *The porchlight shot out.*
*Music that knocks us down.*
*Brow shadowing the guitar player's*
*Accipitrine eyes. Tile roofs*
*Glisten under rain. In rich*
*Bottomland, the glabrous hog*
*Shrieking. Meditative lope*
*On a dirt road, pink*

*Palms flashing back, counter*
*To the forward leg. A kite*
*Hits the copperhead. Cicadas halt,*
*The air blanks. The way strangers*
*Crane up from whatever they are doing*
*To meet your gaze as you go past.*
*I am with you. I am*
*You.*

# CHANTAL THOMAS
# THREE PROSE WORKS

*(Translated from the French by Allen S. Weiss)*

## ARROGANCE

All dolls claim to be descended from The Great Doll. Grotesque! Buffoonery! It's enough to make you cry! They're unbearably arrogant, even those repulsive midgets. They're so pretentious, it's unbelievable. I saw this right away. But this doesn't prevent me in the least from being pleased when someone gives me a doll. Boundlessly happy. I know that later I shall certainly put them in their place, but for the moment I am thrilled, and I throw myself into the arms of the gift-giver with ardor. And my gratitude is sincere. Furthermore, I already anticipate the future procurement of yet another doll thanks to these effusions. "And what do you want her to be like?" "Just the opposite of this one. Marion is a red-head with green eyes, a blue dress, and long legs. She has a delicate, upturned nose and pink lips. Quite distinguished. I wouldn't want to have her for an opponent in tennis. If you want to buy me another doll—which would obviously please me greatly, since there is nothing in the world I love as much as dolls—I'd like a blond one, with hair like embroidery thread, rather small, in a soft material, in foam rubber, providing that it is dense. I don't want a sponge. Laura would thrill me. Not like Marion, whom I grant a distant and fascinating life—she is sublime when, her russet hair flying in the wind, she drives at top speed on the high cliffs—but rather by her closeness. I would confuse her with my pillow. I see her rather thick legs and her feet clad in plastic shoes, with the stitching visible on the soles." "I'm not sure that I can find the exact type that you want," worried my loving parent. "The shoes aren't important. I'll buy them separately. What is important is that Laura be very soft, like chewing gum. A doll that I can chew. Not the porcelain type that makes me sick."

It is true that already some time ago I learned how to dominate them. For example, I scoff at the beautiful Marion's coldness. I'll have nothing to do with it. She and all the others can put on airs, for all I care. But she is not the only one that exists. I possess a bevy of others just as arrogant, just as inaccessible, who spend their nights at parties to which I am not invited.

They scorn me, they despise my withdrawn existence. They go out in evening gowns and leave me to my flannel nightgowns. I hear them whisper: "Really, I wouldn't want to be her!" The very idea makes them laugh. Try as I might to make them capitulate—which can go very far with dolls—I see very well that, supported by their ridiculous prejudices, they snub me. I can strip them of their little well-fitting dresses and roll them in old rags, or drag them naked through the snow, or pierce them all over with needles (my Barbie is a porcupine!)—nothing mars their smiles. They simply give me the once-over through their long curved lashes. They amuse themselves. They know that, whatever happens, they are beautiful. Sometimes, their certitude makes me hesitate. I touch their so very smooth cheeks.

Now, I no longer know what to think. It all began with Anna's fall, which, instead of pleasing me—since she was truly atrocious—really devastated me. She fell as if by herself. It was last summer. I was playing in my bedroom. Suddenly, without any reason, I dropped the old doll that I had inherited from my great-grandmother. Anna, the epitome of porcelain, always seated with her legs spread under a large dress of yellowed lace. Anna, the untamable. I contemplated her pupils specked with gold, and my hands opened all by themselves. She fell like the thing that she was. With a dull noise; without protest. Her nose shattered against the tiles, a small piece of finger flew into splinters, and her eyes came loose under the shock. I gathered it all up and put it in a corner. I went out for a walk. I came upon two women in the garden of the monastery. One said to the other, in a horrified tone: "She lost her nose and something else. I no longer remember what." I was astonished that this old woman already knew. Was she related to my family? Will she stir up the entire city? I decided to return home and try to fix Anna. She was pitiful. If I shook her (and how I shook her!) I heard her eyes dangle around in her head, creating a hellish noise. I tried to catch them with a little spoon. But by doing this I damaged a part of the eye socket. I threw her back into her shoe box.

Some time after, I found all of my dolls assassinated. The killer had gathered them together in a bouquet and, with a single stroke of the axe, decapitated them. "Greetings to the spirit of the Great Doll," he wrote on a piece of newspaper. I touched their so very smooth cheeks. All alone, I sink into the confusion of my feelings.

# HAMLET'S 40 LOCKSMITHS

From the moment that she entered the theater, she was certain that she would always live there, that it was all over, that she would never see her bedroom again. The heavy overcoats worn by all the people around her seemed to confirm this apprehension. It was thus, sick with anguish, that she accepted the offer of an Eskimo bar. She asked for "strawberry" with a sinking voice, all the while thinking, "So, this is all that I will have to eat. I'd better like it. There aren't even peanut vendors in this place." Fortunately, she really liked Eskimo bars, especially because of the chocolate coating, and for the pleasure of sucking on the stick. The stuff in between was less interesting. Her parents leaned towards her and pleaded, "Hurry up and finish before the piece begins." She didn't see what was the hurry, since they would always be locked in there, with their huge coats folded on their knees (doubtlessly, they would later serve as covers to sleep under). She quickly gobbled down her Eskimo bar and, with an icy throat, saw the night fall, and then the stage light up. Except for this coldness in her throat, it was terribly hot. The forehead of the blond man on stage was broken out in sweat. There was something painful about his manner of being hot. Everybody was too hot in this place where they were all trapped. But they had to bear it, and the coats didn't help the situation; while he, that young pale man dressed in black, had a full freedom of movement. If he was in fact dripping under his clothes, it was because he was bustling about so much—nothing prevented him from taking off his jacket. All of a sudden a horseman appeared, an old man crying up there on his horse. And, amidst a terrifying din and whirlwind, he said something to the young man. The little girl was suffocated by this event. She could no longer breathe, fascinated by the level of agitation attained by Hamlet (for it was indeed he, as her mother indicated)—fascinated and full of admiration, for she saw up there someone even more worried than she was, and who, to the contrary, made no effort to conceal his disquietude. Lola wasn't interested in the horse. Her eyes didn't quit those of Hamlet. She followed the wake of a new wrinkle on his exhausted face. He couldn't stand it any more, and his mental decay certainly wouldn't make their life as prisoners any easier. For the moment, they were relatively protected by the darkness of the room, but that would probably work only on the first evening. Each person in turn (and each person's turn would inevitably arrive) would have to gallop up onto the lighted stage, summoned by the prince's anguish. As furious as Lola was about being locked up in the theater, she was equally angry about feeling herself dominated by a fear stronger than her own—perhaps not really stronger, but certainly more decorous, circumspect, meditated. It wasn't for nothing that she had to

finish her Eskimo bar *before* Hamlet appeared. For it was he who directed the game and held them all rapt in the whirlwind of his delirium. She immediately understood that she was the suicidal prince's rival, but that she hadn't the slightest chance of winning. It was inconceivable that, during his dialogue with the dead man, Hamlet would notice the drama of a child panicked by the idea of never returning home. This injustice choked her. A glass of water or another Eskimo bar would have been most welcome. Finally, after a very long time—she really couldn't tell how many hours had passed—the prince departed. Everyone was permitted to stand—but not to leave, of course. Only to take few steps into the entrance hall. Her parents met some friends:

"Desarthe's acting is astonishing. Remarkably perceptive."

"Indeed, and I've seen at least a dozen versions of this piece. I have never before so clearly seen the jubilation at the core of Hamlet's madness. His all-powerfulness. In his own fashion, Hamlet is a monster. The opposite of a tyrant. He doesn't condemn people to death, he doesn't inflict physical suffering. He leads to suicide. He is thrilled when told of Ophelia's death."

"You really think so? I think that you're exaggerating a bit. In any case, the staging is splendid. Those wooden coffins which rise and descend. It doesn't surprise me at all that they needed 40 locksmiths to create it, as the program says."

"Forty locksmiths!?"

"Yes, it says, 17 carpenters and 40 locksmiths."

A bell interrupted their discussion. The crowd returned to its coffin. Nobody argued. And with reason—for if there are 40 locksmiths, thought Lola, we had better be resigned to our fate.

## COOLNESS

As Delphine had a passion for dolls, one day her grandfather suggested that he would take her to see an exhibit of the artist Hans Bellmer. Her parents were not at all thrilled by this idea, but they realized that it was too late to restrain the little girl's enthusiasm. For she was already aware of the project, and whenever someone mentions the word "doll," she is endowed with added energy—just like that which we attribute to madmen when we wish to contain their madness. Besides, this child was in fact a bit mad, reflected each of her parents. And, in their opinion, the grandfather too was

not quite in his right mind. Thus they ended up letting themselves be convinced to permit this outing.

On the way to the gallery, Delphine danced around the legs of the elderly gentleman, all the while describing the latest acquisitions to her doll collection. She was in her folkloric phase. She had just received a Provençal doll clothed in a long black dress with gray and blue stripes. A small shawl was crisscrossed on her head, and her chignon was wrapped in white lace. "Take it easy," grumbled the grandfather, who had just got tripped up by his granddaughter. "Stop for a second, you little devil; you're going to make me fall." But Delphine didn't stop either spinning around or describing her dolls. After the Provençal, there was an Alsatian dressed in red and black; a shepherdess on stilts ("But there is no such thing as a shepherdess on stilts. Only shepherds"—"False, false, false," shouted Delphine); and a Dutch doll. "How do you know that she is Dutch?" "By her clogs." "I wish someone would give me an Indian," dreamily continued Delphine, while stopping in front of a waffle stand. Dolls had invaded both Delphine's mental universe and the real space of her bedroom. They occupied all the shelves, they were piled up in a great wooden trunk at the foot of her bed, and they even entered onto the bed itself, where there were always two or three dolls to be found, half smothered between the covers. . .

"An Indian and a mermaid," reiterated Delphine. But at that moment they arrived at the gallery. Delphine was struck speechless. She saw blond hair, nude bellies, thighs opening onto other thighs, bows alighted like butterflies, white socks crumpled on patent leather shoes. A hand with delicate fingers emerged from a laced sleeve. The other hand held a string from which a blue eye was suspended. "What country are these dolls from?" she finally managed to ask. "They were born in Bellmer's imagination. He was a strange man whom I knew slightly. Very handsome, with a beauty like that of ivory miniatures. Sometimes he said nothing for hours on end, and then all of a sudden he would begin to speak, at which point it was we who fell silent. I remember one summer night, we were all seated outside at the Café du Flore, when he began: 'A small girl all alone, on a long deserted road, it's cool. . .'" Delphine shuddered.

# AARON SHURIN
# TWO PROSE POEMS

## THE DEPOSITORIES

The enemy personified the nation. A fiction or series of fictions exploding through with smoke, pouring sweat. At the foot of a tree hands stuck in the dirt. Once in a while they hold on to me.

A couple of them seemed to be moving around the field, black-eyed, loose splinters from the neighborhood, full of wasted determination. He coughed it up on the pillow in a sort of puddle. The forms lying there, vacant, removed from there.

The house thin, blue, hanging in the air, transparent in the trees, the forms of the trees, no partition whichever way you move . . .

This man was weak, received a box from home, munching on a bloody cracker in the remaining hand. Two boat loads arriving, exposed to it anywhere, torches on the ground, rags around heads, hot at night with sudden energy, the maintaining skin of vengeance. Green oozing out from the grass—large spaces swept over—burning the dead beards, odor of the rejected arm and leg. In history the papers remain and still remain, soaking up the glaze . . .

I sit by his shining hair, the heart of the stranger. His ashy eyes, roasted in the morning. As you pass by, be on guard where you look. Opposite my window the freed horses are led off. The smoke streams upward, dark, thick, warm.

He said, "Make your own choice." The kiss I gave him discharged better views.

The man is struggling for breath; a soldier's life must be a bent thing. Others are arranged in a straight row. They have some old magazines I was in the

habit of reading: theory, practice, democratic premises, superfluity. He was an ideal of his age in a few days. He kept a diary and wrote, "The doctors have been brave."

I am taking care of a silent rebel, laid down on his arm to see its distribution, lying on the spot that time a hole in the air, his small calculations extruded. Meat might be named from mere demonism; nature and pretence were there.

I like to stand and look a long while. Individuals in human places verify the forms. The dim leaden members with heads leaning and voices speaking. In the arms and in the legs from my observation.

Dear Madame, I have seized the testimony, still alive. I do not know his past life, but feel as if it must have been good. I saw circumstances, and can give you some fragmentary physiognomy and idioms. . .

Flesh of his breast and tremulous arms in the strain of a partial sleep, I have a special friend. Out of the shadowy scene the white beds, sat by a huddled form, shone in through the window a vacant moon. . .

*Buttons. . . tufts of hair. . .*
*In bushes, low gullies, or on the sides of hills. . .*

## IN

It was waiting for me, the streets, beers, and basement corridors. The women dressed up hot pictures good in that dress walked me into my breasts, we were smelling like strong arms when the music stopped. Her feet standing over me were falling into my shaking hands.

She stepped out of her dress; I slipped off my wig; she took off her earrings; I put on that nice girl. I could tell from her face I was happy.

Nostalgia might have a dress-up fetish; just thinking about it was everything white. Sky full of street light make you feel snow, pizza, polished nails, believe in affairs who they are with those cherry all over the floor.

Some people have coffee pots or a couple of magazines. Her story was made for illusion in expensive leather jackets—each name those pages on a marquee—girls hanging out with girls opened my mouth: a reflection came out. A real person was talking to me with blonde tips.

"Where are we going?"
"I have the key."
"People can go anywhere."
"They're different."
"I'm gonna be one too."
"They know where they live," she said; I handed her my sweets and shivered.
"You know the difference."

She went into the next room, her breasts in the next song. Her eyes on the open floor—what you want from me. Old lipstick lurked everywhere, thick and shiny and clutching that little piece of metal. The mouth myself—color what hurts most—I would kiss her ass lying face up looking for a little girl.

I remembered any time I chose, running my forefinger along its farther chamber. In and out of costumes—something very personal—riding the motorcycle highway with summer streaming behind you, put on my silky body billowing touchable, cowboy suede and played the jukebox, a private conversation and when it was over I was thrilled in the shadows.

She reached out with long hands and gave the woman a shove. Please let me stay, faster and faster, where earlier she was nowhere to be found. I watched how I reacted. She smelled like breathing—muscles tell how they really feel—on my neck to see her teeth changing my life.

She put her arms around me—big hands comes home at night—I think needing loving from her woman. She was so close in the lightest way waves of dark smoke. I breathed and stepped into the possibilities.

SUSAN HOWE

# THESE FLAMES AND GENEROSITIES OF THE HEART: EMILY DICKINSON AND THE ILLOGIC OF SUMPTUARY VALUES

Spirit cannot be moved by Flesh – It must be moved by spirit –
It is strange that the most intangible is the heaviest – but joy and
Gravitation have their own ways. My ways are not your ways –

(L pf44)

An idea of the author Emily Dickinson – her symbolic value and aesthetic function – has been shaped by *The Poems of Emily Dickinson; Including variant readings critically compared with all known manuscripts:* edited by Thomas H. Johnson, and first published by the Belknap Press of Harvard University in 1951, later digested into a one volume edition, to which I do not refer, because of Johnson's further acknowledged editorial emendations. For a long time I believed that this editor had given us the poems as they looked. Nearly forty years later, *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson,* edited by R. W. Franklin, again published by the Belknap Press of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, in 1981, and *The Master Letters of Emily Dickinson,* also edited by R. W. Franklin in 1986, this time published by the Amherst College Press, show me that in a system of restricted exchange, the subject-creator and her art in its potential gesture were domesticated and occluded by an assumptive privileged Imperative.

• • • •

*A Concrete Community of Exchange Among Peers*

**1951:** "1860: Alignment of words less regular, letters in a word sometimes diminishing in size toward the end, which gives an uneven effect to the page. *No important changes in form"* [my itals.] (PED liv)

**1986:** "Standard typesetting conventions have also been followed in regard to spacing and punctuation. No attempt has been made to indicate the amount of space between words, or between words and punctuation, or to indicate, for example, the length of a dash, its angle, spatial relation to adjoining words, or distance from the line of inscription. Dashes of any

length are represented by an en dash, spaced on each side. Periods, commas, question marks, ending quotation marks, and the like have no space preceding them, however situated in the manuscripts. Stray marks have been ignored." (ML 10)

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*Fellows*

**1958:** Thomas H. Johnson: Introduction to *The Letters of Emily Dickinson.*

"Since Emily Dickinson's full maturity as a dedicated artist occurred during the span of the Civil War, the most convulsive era of the nation's history, one of course turns to the letters of 1861–1865, and the years that follow, for her interpretation of events. But the fact is that she did not live in history and held no view of it past or current." (L xx)

**1986:** Ralph W. Franklin: Introduction to *The Master Letters.*

"Dickinson did not write letters as a fictional genre, and these were surely part of a much larger correspondence yet unknown to us. In the earliest one, written when both she and Master were ill, she is responding to his initiative after a considerable silence. The tone, a little distant but respectful and gracious, claims few prerogatives from their experience, nothing more than the license to be concerned about his health. . . . The other two letters, written a few years later, stand in impassioned contrast to this. . . . In both she defends herself, reviewing their history, asserting her fidelity. She asks what he would do if she came "in white." She pleads to see him. (ML 5)

A drop of ink mars the top of the third page [first letter], but it may have come after she had written ***an awkward predication*** further down the same page:

> Each Sabbath on the
> sea, makes me count
> the Sabbaths, till we
> meet on shore – and
> whether the hills will
> look as blue as the
> sailors say –

This would require obtrusive correction, and what was to have been a final draft became an intermediate one." [my itals.] (ML 11)

**1951:** T. H. Johnson: Introduction to Emily Dickinson's *Collected Poems* called "Creating the Poems: The Poet and the Muse."

"It would thus appear that when Emily Dickinson was about twenty years old her latent talents were invigorated by a gentle, grave young man [Benjamin Franklin Newton] who taught her how to observe the world . . . . Perhaps during the five years after Newton's death she was trying to fashion verses in a *desultory* manner. Her muse had left the land and she must wait the coming of another. That event occurred in 1858 or 1859 in the person of the Reverend Charles Wadsworth. . . .A volcanic commotion is becoming apparent in the life of Emily Dickinson. . . . Except to her sister Lavinia, who never saw Wadsworth, she talked to no one about him. That fact alone establishes the place he filled in the structure of her emotion. Whereas Newton as muse had awakened her to a sense of her talents, Wadsworth as muse made her a poet. The Philadelphia pastor, now forty-seven, was at the zenith of his mature influence, fifteen years married and the head of a family, an established man of God whose rectitude was unquestioned. . . .By 1870. . . the crisis in Emily Dickinson's life was over. Though nothing again would wring from her the anguish and the fulfillment of the years 1861–1865, she continued to write *verses* throughout her life." [my itals.] (PED xxii-iv)

**1971:** *Webster's Third New International Dictionary.*

"VERSE: 3 a (1): metrical language: speech or writing distinguished from ordinary language by its distinctive patterning of sounds and esp. by its more pronounced or elaborate rhythm. (2): metrical writing that is distinguished from poetry esp. by its lower level of intensity and its lack of essential conviction and commitment. <many writers of ~~who have not aimed at writing poetry – T.S. Eliot> (3): POETRY 2 <~~that gives immortal youth to mortal maids – W.S. Landor>

4 a (1): a unit of metrical writing larger than a single line: STANZA."

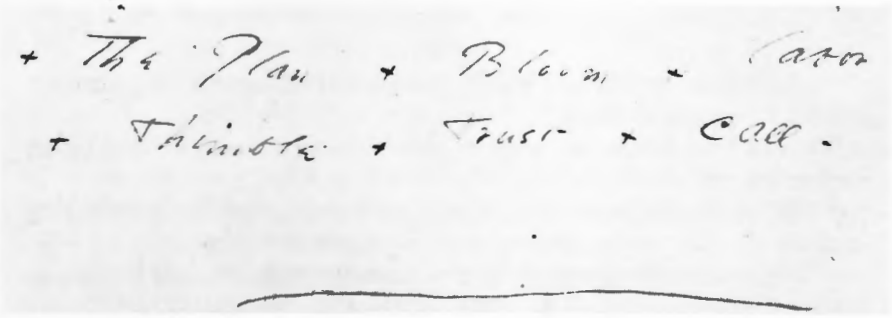
• • • •

*Circles*

In 1985 I wrote a letter to Ralph Franklin, the busy director of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, to suggest the *Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* show that after the ninth fascicle, (about 1860), she began to break her lines with a consistency that the Johnson edition seemed to have ignored. I was interested because Franklin is currently editing the new *Poems of Emily Dickinson; Including variant readings critically compared with all known manuscripts,* for Harvard

University Press. I received a curt letter in response. He told me the notebooks were not artistic structures and were not intended for other readers: Dickinson had a long history of sending poems to people individual poems – that were complete, he said. My suggestion about line breaks depended on an "assumption" that one reads in lines; he asked, "what happens if the form lurking in the mind is the *stanza?*" [my itals.]

* * * *



(MB s3 n1020)
(PED n944)

Thomas H. Johnson's *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* did restore the poet's idiosyncratic spelling, punctuation (the famous dashes), and word variants to her poems. At the same time he created the impression that a definitive textual edition could exist. He called his Introduction "Creating the Poems" then gave their creator a male muse-minister. He arranged her "verses" into hymn-like stanzas with little variation in form and no variation of cadence. By choosing a sovereign system for her line endings – *his* preappointed Plan, he established the constraints of a strained positivity. Copious footnotes, numbers, comparisons and chronologies mask his authorial role.

Here is a typographical transcription of Dickinson's manuscript version:

> Experience is the Angled
> Road
> Preferred against the
> Mind
> By ~ Paradox – The
> Mind itself ~
> Presuming it to lead

Quite Opposite - How
Complicate
The Discipline of
Man -
Compelling Him to
Choose Himself
His Pre appointed Pain -

(MB s5 1033)
(PED n910)

*The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* complicate T. H. Johnson's criteria for poetic order.

These lines traced by pencil or in ink on paper were formed by an innovator.

This visible handwritten sequence establishes an enunciative clearing outside intention while obeying intuition's agonistic necessity.

These lines move freely through a notion of series we may happen to cross – ambiguous articulated Place.

At the end of conformity on small sheets of stationery:

When Winds hold Forests in their Paws –
The Firmaments – are still –
The Universe – is still

(MB f22 p505)
(PED n315)

Deflagration of what was there to say. No message to decode or finally decide. The fascicles have a "halo of wilderness." By continually interweaving expectation and categories they checkmate inscription to become what a reader offers them.

Publication – is the Auction
Of the Mind of Man -
Poverty - be justifying
For so foul a thing

Possibly - but We - would
rather
From Our Garret go
White - Unto the White Creator –
Than invest - Our Snow -

Thought belong to Him who
gave it –
Then – to Him Who bear
Its Corporeal illustration – Sell
The Royal Air –

In the Parcel – Be the Merchant
Of the Heavenly Grace –
But reduce no Human Spirit
To Disgrace of Price –

(MB f37 p915)
(PED n709)

Use value is a blasphemy. Form and content collapse the assumption of Project and Masterpiece. Free from limitations of genre Language finds true knowledge estranged in it-self.

Distance – be Her only
Motion –
If tis Nay – or Yes –
Acquiescence – or Demurral –
Whosoever guess –

He – must pass the Crystal Angle
That obscure Her face –
He – must have achieved in
person
Equal Paradise –

too Swelling fitter for
the feet Ever could endow –
claim Signal – first – limit
divide –

(MB f34 p818)
(PED n649)

**1991:** ***An editor's query:*** "You need to give the reader some thoughts about making use of the words at the end of the 'poem proper.' (in this case, I think, beginning with 'too swelling fitter for.') Are we to attach these words as alternatives to certain words in the 'poem'?; i.e., *where does 'too' go? What am I to do with it?"*

This is a good question: Thomas Johnson reads these words as alternatives.

**1828:** Noah Webster: *An American Dictionary of the English Language.*

**TOO,** *adv.* [Sax, *to.*]

1. Over; more than enough; noting excess; as, a thing is *too* long, *too* short, or *too* wide; *too* high; *too* many; *too* much.

> His will *too* strong to bend, *too* proud to learn. *Cowley*

2. Likewise; also; in addition.

> A courtier and a patriot *too.* Pope.
> Let those eyes that view
> The daring crime, behold the vengeance *too.* Pope.

3. *Too, too,* repeated, denotes excess emphatically; but this repetition is not in respectable use. (WD II 95)*

• • • •

*Rearrangement*

Much critical and editorial attention has been given to Dickinson's use of capitalization and the dash in her poems and letters, while motivating factors for words and phrases she often added to a "poem proper," sometimes in the margins, sometimes between lines, but most often at the end, have aroused less interest. Since the Johnson edition was published in 1951, it has been a given of Dickinson scholarship that these words represent nothing more than suggested alternates for specific words in the text the poet had frequently marked with a cross.

Ralph Franklin says that after 1861 these possibilities for alternate readings are a part of the structure of the poems she transcribed and bound together, and his edition of the *Manuscript Books* show this to have been the case.

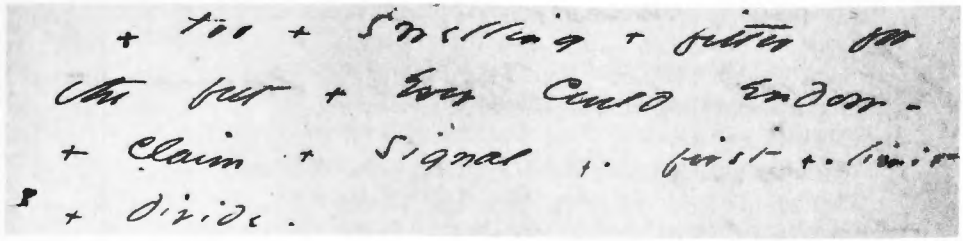
After 1861 Dickinson's practise of variation and fragmentation also included line breaks. Unlike Franklin, I believe there is a reason for them.

This space is the poem's space. Letters are sounds we see. Sounds leap to the eye. Word lists, crosses, blanks, and ruptured stanzas are points of

* Emily Dickinson owned an 1844 reprint of Webster's 1840 edition. The family owned the 1828 two volume first edition. Webster, a friend of the Dickinson family, was a resident of Amherst, helped to found Amherst College with Samuel Fowler Dickinson, and served on the board of the Amherst Academy with Edward Dickinson.

contact and displacement. Line breaks and visual contrapuntal stresses represent an athematic compositional intention.

This space is the poet's space. Its demand is her method.



(MB f34 p818)

One of Thomas Johnson's contributions to transmission of the handwritten manuscripts into print was to place these words, sometimes short phrases, at the end of a poem as Dickinson had done. But he couldn't leave it at that. This textual scholar-editor, probably with the best intentions, matched word to counter word, numbered lines as *he* had re-duplicated them, then exchanged his line numbers for her crosses.

3. True] too
6. Loaded] Swelling
13. Fitter feet – of Her] fitter for the feet
16] Ever could endow-
17. ask] claim
21. Motion] Signal
25. He] first
25. Angle] limit
26. obscure] divide –

(PED n649)

Emily Dickinson's writing is a premeditated immersion in immediacy.

Codes are confounded and converted. "Authoritative readings" confuse her nonconformity.

In 1991 these manuscripts still represent a Reformation.

• • • •

*Swelling*

*Noah Webster:*

> SWELL, *v.t.* To increase the size, bulk, or dimensions of; to cause to rise, dilate, or increase. Rains and dissolving snows *swell* the rivers in spring, and cause floods. Jordan is *swelled* by the snows of Mount Libanus.

• • • •

"The flood of her talent is rising." (L332)

The production of meaning will be brought under the control of social authority.

For T. H. Johnson, R. W. Franklin, and their publishing institution, the Belknap Press of Harvard University, the conventions of print require humilities of caution.

Obedience to tradition. Dress up dissonance. Customary usage.

Provoking visual fragmentation will be banished from the body of the "poem proper."

Numbers and word matches will valorize these sensuous visual catastrophes.

Lines will be brought into line without any indication of their actual position.

An editor edits for mistakes. Subdivided in conformity with propriety.

A discreet biographical explanation: unrequited love for a popular minister will consecrate the gesture of this unconverted antinomian who refused to pass her work through proof.

Later the minister will turn into a man called "Master."

*R.W. Franklin:*

> Although there is no evidence the [Master] letters were ever posted (none of the surviving documents would have been in suitable condition), they indicate a long relationship, geographically apart, in which correspondence would have been the primary means of communication. (ML 5)

Poems will be called letters and letters will be called poems.

"The tone is a little distant but respectful and gracious." (ML 5)

". . .the Hens

*lay finely. . .*" (Epigraph to L part I, vol I)

Now she is her sex for certain for editors picking and choosing for a general reader reading.

NOMINALIST and REALIST

"Into [print] will I grind thee, my bride." (E II 241)

Franklin's facsimile edition of *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* shows some poems with so many lists of words or variants that even Johnson, who was nothing if not methodical, couldn't find numbers for such polyphonic visual complexity.

What if the author went to great care to fit these words onto pages she could have copied over? Left in place, seemingly scattered and random, these words form their own compositional relation.

*R.W. Emerson:*

> I am very much struck in literature by the appearance that one person wrote all the books; as if the editor of a journal planted his body of reporters in different parts of the field of action, and relieved some by others from time to time: but there is such equality and identity both of judgment and point of view in the narrative that it is plainly the work of one all-seeing, all-hearing gentleman. I looked into Pope's Odyssey yesterday: it is as correct and elegant after our canon of to-day as if it were newly written. (E II 232 )

*Antinomy:* A conflict of authority. A contradiction between conclusions which seem equally logical reasonable correct sealed natural necessary.

**1637:** Thomas Dudley at *Mrs. Ann Hutchinson's examination by the General Court at Newton:*

"What is the scripture she brings?" (A 338)

An improper poem. Not in respectable use. Another way of reading.

Troubled subject-matter is like troubled water.

* * * *

*Fire may be raked up in the ashes, though not seen.*

Words are only frames. No comfortable conclusion. Letters are scrawls, turnabouts, astonishments, strokes, cuts, masks.

These poems are representations. These manuscripts should be understood as visual productions.

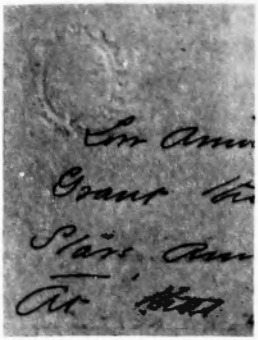
The physical act of copying is a mysterious sensuous expression.

Wrapped in the mirror of the word.

Most often these poems were copied onto sheets of stationery previously folded by the manufacturer. The author paid attention to the smallest physical details of the page. Embossed seals in the corner of recto and verso leaves of paper are part of the fictitious real.

(MB f8 p134)
(PED n168)

Basket of flowers.
C.V. MILLS, capitol and CONGRESS.
Capitol in oval.
CONGRESS above capitol.
Flower in oval.
G&T in eight-sided device.
G.& T. in oval.
LEE MASS.
PARSONS PAPER CO.
Queen's head above L (laid).
Queen's head above L (wove).
WM above double-headed eagle. (MB p1411)



(MB f8 p135)
(PED n168)

Spaces between letters, dashes, apostrophes, commas, crosses, form networks of signs and discontinuities.

"Train up a Heart in the way it should go and as quick as it can twill depart from it." (L pf115)

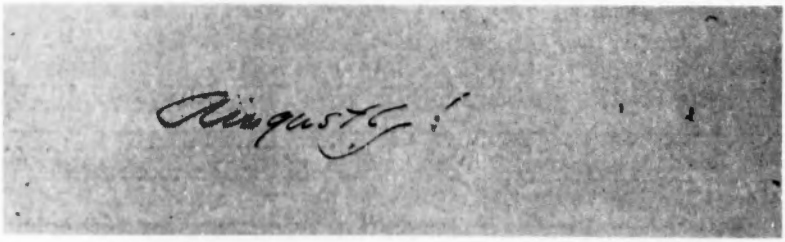
Mystery is the content. Intractable expression. Deaf to rules of composition.

What is writing but continuing.

Who knows what needs she has?

The greatest trial is trust.

Fire in the heart overcomes fire without



Franklin's notes to set 7 tell us: "On her inventory of the manuscripts obtained from her mother [Mabel Loomis Todd], MTB [Millicent Todd Bingham] recorded a small slip laid inside sheet A 86-3/4 bearing only the word "Augustly!" The paper is wove, cream, and blue-ruled. (F II 1387)

*Disjunct Leaves*

Emily Dickinson almost never titled a poem.

She titled poems several times.

She drew an ink slash at the end of a poem.

Sometimes she didn't.

She seldom used numbers to show where a word or a poem should go.

She sometimes used numbers to show where a word or a line should go.

The poems in packets and sets can be read as a linked series.

The original order of the packets was broken by her friends and first editors so that even R.W. Franklin – the one scholar, apart from the Curator of Manuscripts, allowed unlimited access to the originals at Harvard University's Houghton Library – can only be absolutely sure of a particular series order for poems on a single folded sheet of stationery.

Maybe the poems in a packet were copied down in random order and the size of letter paper dictated a series: maybe not.

When she sent her first group of poems to T.W. Higginson she sent them separately but together.

She chose separate poems from the packets to send to friends.

Sometimes letters are poems with a salutation and signature.

Sometimes poems are letters with a salutation and signature.

If limits disappear where will we find bearings?

What were her intentions for these crosses and word lists?

If we could perfectly restore each packet to its original order, her original impulse would be impossible to decipher. The manuscript books and sets preserve their insubordination. They can be read as events, signals in a pattern, relays, inventions; or singular hymn-like stanzas.

T.W. Higginson wrote in his "Preface" to *Poems by Emily Dickinson* (1890): "The verses of Emily Dickinson belong emphatically to what Emerson long since called 'The Poetry of the Portfolio,' – something produced absolutely without the thought of publication, and solely by way of the writer's own mind. . . .They are here published as they were written, with very few and superficial changes; although it is fair to say the titles have been assigned, almost invariably, by the editors." (P iii-v).

But the poet's manuscript books and sets had already been torn open. Their contents had been sifted, translated, titled; then re-grouped under categories called by her two first editor-"friends": "Life," "Love," "Nature," "Time and Eternity."

• • • •

*White lines on a white stone*

On 12 September, 1840, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote to Elizabeth Hoar: "My chapter on 'Circles' begins to prosper, and when it is October I shall write like a Latin Father." (E I *n*433)

"The one thing which we seek with insatiable desire is to forget ourselves, to be surprised out of our propriety, to lose our sempiternal memory and to do something without knowing how or why; in short to draw a new circle. Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. The way of life is wonderful; it is by abandonment." (EI 321)

• • • •

*Overflow*

**1891:** Twenty years after the event, T.W. Higginson, with Mabel Loomis Todd, the first editor of Emily Dickinson's poetry, recalled one of his two meetings with the poet.

"The impression undoubtedly made on me was that of an excess of tension, and of an abnormal life. Perhaps in time I could have got beyond that somewhat overstrained relation which not my will, but her needs had forced upon us. Certainly I should have been most glad to bring it down to the level of simple truth and every-day comradeship; but it was not altogether easy." (L *n*342*b)*

**TOO,** *adv.* [Sax. *to.*]

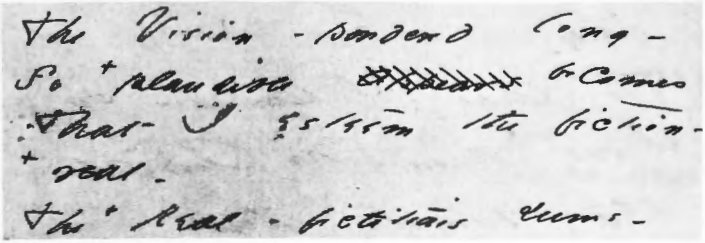
Over; more than enough; noting excess as, a thing is *too* long, *too* short, *too* wide, *too* high, *too* many, *too* much. (WD II 95)

• • • •

*Coming to Grips with the World*

In 1986 Ralph Franklin sent me a copy of *The Master Letters of Emily Dickinson,* published by the Amherst College Press. Along with *The Manuscript Books,* this is the most important contribution to Dickinson scholarship I know of. In this edition Franklin decided on a correct order for the letters, showed facsimiles, and had them set in type on each facing page, with the line breaks as she made them. I wrote him a letter again suggesting that if he broke the lines here, according to the original text, he might consider doing the same for the poems. He thanked me for my "immodest" compliments and said he had broken the letters line-for-physical line only to make reference to the facsimiles easier; if he were editing a book of the letters, he would use run-on treatment as there is no

expected genre form for prose. He told me there is such a form for poetry and he intended to follow it, rather than accidents of physical line breaks on paper.



(MB f34p815)
(PED n646)

As a poet I cannot assert that Dickinson composed in stanzas and was careless about line breaks. In the precinct of Poetry, a word, the space around a word, each letter, every mark, silence, or sound, volatizes an inner law of form – moves on a rigorous line.

I wonder at Ralph Franklin's conclusion that these facsimiles are not to be considered as artistic structures.

How can this meticulous editor, whose acute attention to his subject-matter has yet to be deciphered in the neutralized reading even her fervent admirers give her, now repress the physical immediacy of these spiritual improvisations he has brought to light?

A Man may ^make
a Remark -
In itself - a ^quiet thing
That may furnish ^ the
Fuse unto a Spark
In dormant nature - lain -

Let us ^divide - with
skill -
Let us ^discourse -with
care -
Powder exists in ^Charcoal -
Before it ^exists in
Fire -

+ drop + tranquil + ignition
+ deport + disclose
+ Elements – sulphurets
+ express

(MB s5 p1047)
(PED n952)

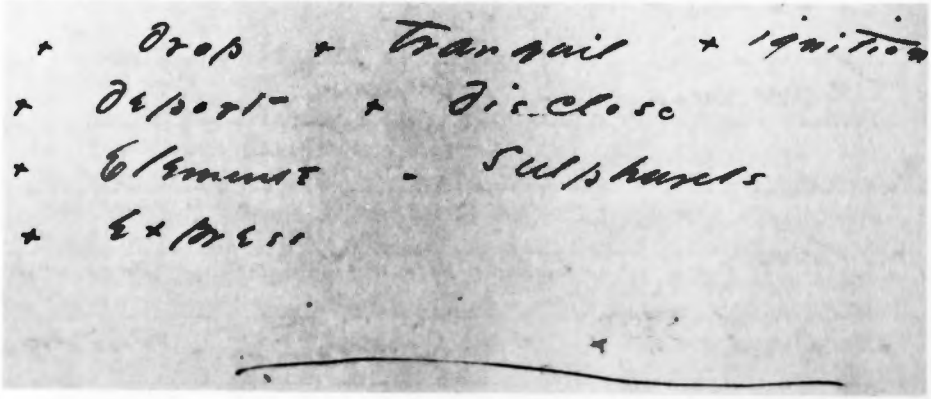
Simple reflection should cast light on the inauthentic nostalgia of *A Portrait Of The Artist As A Woman* isolated from historical consciousness, killing time for no reason but arbitrary convenience, as she composes, transcribes, and arranges into notebooks or sets, over a thousand visionary works.

During her lifetime this writer refused to collaborate with the institutions of publishing. When she created herself author, editor, and publisher, she situated her production in a field of free transgressive pre-discovery.

It is over a hundred years after her death; if I am writing a book and I quote from one of her letters or poems and use either the Johnson or Franklin edition of her texts, I must obtain permission from and pay a fee to:

> The President and Fellows of Harvard College
> and the Trustees of Amherst College

"is this the Hope that opens and shuts, like the eye of the Wax Doll?
Your Scholar –" (L n553)
"This is the World that opens and shuts, like the Eye of the Wax
Doll –"
(L n54)



(MB s5 p1047)

Poetry is never a personal possession. The poem was a vision and gesture before it became sign and coded exchange in a political economy of value. At the moment these manuscripts are accepted into the property of our culture their philosopher-author escapes the ritual of framing – symmetrical order and arrangement. Are all these works poems? Are they fragments, meditations, aphorisms, events, letters? After the first nine fascicles, lines break off interrupting meter. Right hand margins perish into edges sometimes tipped by crosses and calligraphic slashes.

This World is not Conclusion -
A ⁺ Species stands beyond ˎ
Invisible ˏ as Music ˎ
But positive ˏ as Sound -
It beckons ˏ and it baffles -
Philosophy ˏ dont know ˎ
And through a Riddle ˏ at the last ˎ
Sagacity ˏ must go -
To ⁺ guess it ˏ puzzles scholars -
To gain it Men have borne
Contempt of Generations
And Crucifixion ˏ shown -
Faith slips ˎ and laughs ˏ and rallies ˎ
Blushes ˏ if any see ˎ
Plucks at a twig of Evidence ˎ
And asks a Vane ˏ the way -
Much Gesture from the
Pulpit ˉ
Strong ⁺ Hallelujahs roll -
Narcotics cannot still the
Tooth
That nibbles at the soul –

⁺ A sequel - ⁺ prove it ˎ
⁺ Sure ⁺ Mouse ˎ .

(MB f18p396-7)
(PED n501)

Define the bounds of naked Expression. *Use.*

All scandalous breakings out are thoughts at first. Resequenced. Shifted. Excluded. Lost.

"She reverted to pinning slips to sheets to maintain the proper association." (MB p1413)

Oneness and scattering.

Marginal notes. Irretrievable indirection –

Uncertainty extends to the heart of replication. Meaning is scattered at the limit of concentration. The other of meaning is indecipherable variation.

In the section of his preface to *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* called "Creating the Poems: Private Audiences," T. H. Johnson referred to her "fear of publication" as many others have done since. He called her poems "effusions." During the 1860s, "her creative energies were at flood, and she was being overwhelmed by forces which she could not control." (PED xviii)

"Over; more than enough; noting excess, as, a thing is *too* long, *too* short, *too* high, *too* many, *too* much." (WD II 95)

Wayward Puritan. Charged with enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is antinomian.

• • • •

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**(L [pf=prose fragment])**

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• • • •

**Notes:**
My title is the seven last words of Emerson's essay called "Circles."

"A man," said Oliver Cromwell, "never rises so high as when he knows not whither he is going. Dreams and drunkenness, the use of opium and alcohol are the semblance and counterfeit of this oracular genius, and hence their dangerous attraction for men. For the like reason they ask the aid of wild passions, as in gaming and war, to ape in some manner these flames and generosities of the heart." (E I 322)

I have tried to match the poems in type, as nearly as possible, to the Franklin edition of *The Manuscript Books.* In translating Dickinson's handwriting into type I have *not* followed standard typesetting conventions. I *have* paid attention to space between handwritten words. I *have* broken the lines exactly as she broke them. I *have* tried to match the spacing between words in the lists at the end of poems. I have not been able to pay attention to spaces between letters. I think in the later poetry that such spacing is part of the meaning. Dickinson's frequent use of the dash was noted in the Johnson edition, but he regularized these marks. For this essay in *Sulfur* I have drawn the marks in, because the cost of typesetting would be prohibitive. Ideally they should be translated into type. I know that in some books printed during the 19th century, variant readings were sometimes supplied at the end of a page and they were marked by a sort of cross. *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649,* by John Winthrop, edited by James Savage, and published in Boston in 1826, is a good example of such practise; however, if there were more than two words a number was used for the second one, and in other books the number of crosses increased for each word. Emily Dickinson had enough humor to read these variants as found poems. She was her own publisher and could do as she liked with her texts. These were the days of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll; liberties were taken in print.

The bottom of a page of the Savage edition of Winthrop's *History* looked like this:

some other place, which they both consented to, but still the difficulty remained; for those three, who pretended themselves

||conferred|| ||[2]step|| ||[3]we|| ||[4]taking|| ||[5]her||

39 VOL. I.

**Reason 2. All punishments ought to be just, and, offences varying so much in their merit by occasion of circumstances, it would be unjust to inflict the same punishment upon the least as upon the greatest.**

||theft|| ||[2]presumptuous||

---

These manuscript books and sets represent the poet's "letter to the world." The discovery of these packets and sets galvanized her sister Lavinia into action. If Dickinson sent some of the poems in letters to friends she also left these packets in a certain order. It is doubtful, to say the least, whether her various correspondents would have bothered to collect and then publish her poem/letters.

I have followed Johnson's choice for capitals, although I feel I could argue with his choices at times. I have only been allowed access to the originals of two manuscript books and as a result I wouldn't dare to. In a review of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* published in the Boston *Public Library Quarterly*, July, 1956, the poet Jack Spicer suggested such marks might have been meant as signs "of stress and tempo stronger than a comma and weaker than a period." The new critical edition must re-consider such questions. In the early fascicles Dickinson frequently uses exclamation marks. Around fascicles #6–#12, as she begins to break her lines a new way and to regularly insert variant words into the structure of the work, nervous and repetitive exclamation marks change to the more abstract and sweeping dash. Sometimes the way she crosses her t's (and this no printed version could match) seems to influence the length of the direction of the direction of the dash. The crosses she added to her texts when she included variant word possibilities should also be translated into print. The most frequent argument in favor of Johnson's changing the line breaks is the assumption that Dickinson (thrifty Yankee spinster) broke her lines at the right hand margin because of the size of the paper she was using. In other words, she ran out of space and wanted to save paper. Close examination of the Franklin Manuscript edition shows that she could have put words onto a line had she wished to; in some cases she did crowd words onto a line. As she went on working Dickinson increased the space between words and eventually the space between letters. If you follow Johnson's edition you get the idea that there was no change in form from the first poem in fascicle 1 to the last poems in the sets.

In the long run, the best way to read Dickinson is to read the facsimiles, because her calligraphy influences her meaning. However Franklin's edition is far too expensive for most people and then there is the added difficulty of reading handwriting. I think her poems need to be transcribed into type, although increasingly I wonder if this is possible. If the cost of the *Manuscript Books* is prohibitive, what would an edition of the *Collected Letters* cost? Can the later letters and poems be separated into different categories? I am a poet, not a textual scholar. In 1956 Spicer wrote: "The reason for the difficulty of drawing a line between the poetry and prose of Emily Dickinson is that she did not wish such a line to be drawn. If large portions of her correspondence are considered not as mere letters – and indeed, they seldom communicate information, or have much to do with the person to whom they were written – but as experiments in a heightened prose combined with poetry, a new approach to her letters opens up." He based his opinion on careful examination of the letters and poems owned by the Boston Public Library.

For its time the Johnson edition was a necessary contribution to any Dickinson scholarship. It radically changed the reading of her poetry. I can't imagine my life as a poet without it. But as Emerson wrote in "Circles," "The universe is fluid and volatile. Permanence is but a word of degrees. . . .Our culture is the predominance of an idea which draws after it this train of cities and institutions. Let us rise into another idea, they will disappear." A lot has changed in poetry and in academia since 1951. The crucial advance for Dickinson textual scholarship was Ralph Franklin's facsimile edition of *The Manuscript Books*. Now the essentialist practice of traditional Dickinson textual scholarship needs to acknowledge the way these texts continually open inside meaning to be rethought. In a Dickinson poem or letter there is always something other.

Cristianne Miller, in *Emily Dickinson; A Poet's Grammar*, (1987, Harvard University Press) discusses Dickinson's use of Noah Webster's introductory essay to his American Dictionary. Paula Bennet, in *Emily Dickinson; Woman Poet*, (1990, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Key Women Writer Series), has kept to Dickinson's lineation and her method of indicating the variants with a cross, as long as she has been able to work from poems in the facsimile edition. Martha Nell Smith discusses the problem of textual meddling with Dickinson's letters to Susan Gilbert Dickinson in "To Fill A Gap" (San Jose Studies, 13, 1987). Mary Jo Salter discusses the variant words and takes note of precise details of the handwritten texts in "Puns and Accordions: Emily Dickinson and the Unsaid" *(Yale Review*, vol. 79, n. 2, October, 1990). These scholars are showing new directions for Dickinson scholarship.

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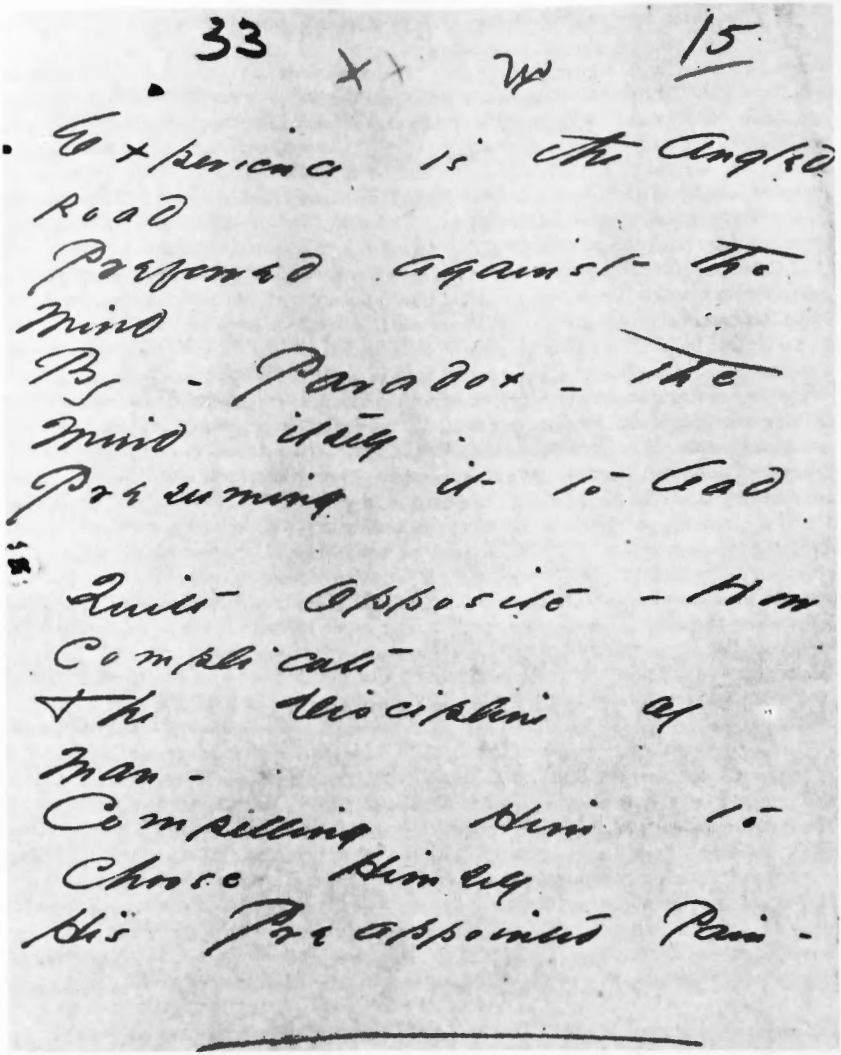


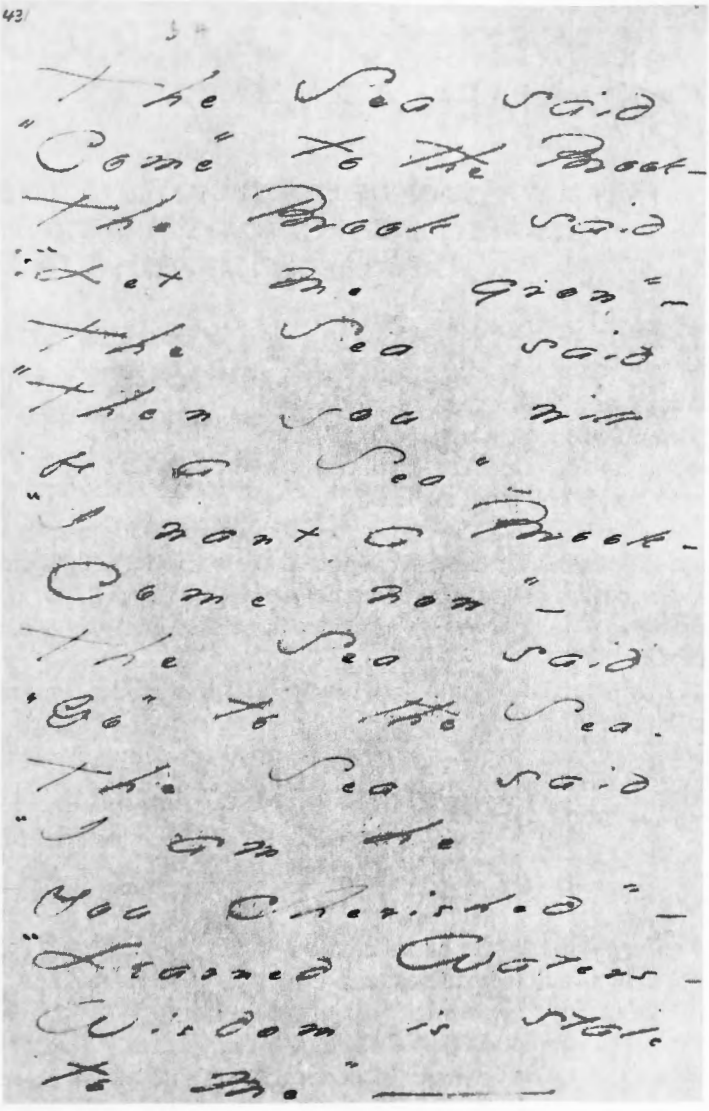

910

Experience is the Angled Road
Preferred against the Mind
By - Paradox - the Mind itself -
Presuming it to lead

(MB s5 p1033)
1864-5

Quite opposite - How Complicate
The Discipline of Man -
Compelling Him to Choose Himself
His Preappointed Pain -

(PED n910)



The Sea said "Come" to the Brook -
The Brook said "Let me grow" -
The Sea said "Then you will be a Sea" -
"I want a Brook - Come now" -
The Sea said "Go" to the Sea -
The Sea said "I am he
You cherished" - "Learned Waters -
Wisdom is stale to me" -

(F s11 p1342)
about 1871

(PED n1342)

# GUY ETIENNE

# TEN POEMS *from* LA PIERRE DU OUI / MAEN AR YA

*(Translated from the Breton by Alain E. Le Berre and the author; translated from the Breton into English by Alain E. Le Berre)*

2 gwengolo 1977—Paris

Unnek eur beure e liorzh ar Champ de Mars
e deizioù kentañ heoliek gwengolo 1977,
kammedoù Japaniz evezhet o kilañ didrouz war al leton
kameraoù buket-holl ouzh an Tour,

blin—en askont eus an oad o tont, en askont eus an dour-kafe a servijont en ostaleri, en askont dreist-holl ma'z on bet blin a-viskoazh daoust d'ar pezh a gave d'an holl nemet un pe div,

e soñjan e blinder ar re vlin, e blinder ar varzhed a zo ar re vlinañ eus an holl dud,

diwar o c'havell ez int ar frailh, ar gwan, ar c'hizidig, enskrivet ar blinder e molekul o c'hig,

diwar an derou eo tonket o buhez da vezañ treadenn ; dizoleiñ a ray traezhennoù lenkr ma ne gredo den lakaat e droad, melezourioù tanav, ansouezh ar bloavezhioù.

2 septembre 1977—Paris

Onze heures du matin au Champ de Mars
premiers jours ensoleillés de septembre 1977,
des pas de Japonais attentifs se reculant sans bruit sur
le gazon toutes caméras dressées visant la Tour,

faible—à cause de l'âge qui vient, à cause du café plat qu'ils servent à l'hôtel, à cause surtout de ma faiblesse de toujours quoi qu'ils aient pensé tous excepté une ou deux—

je pense à la faiblesse des faibles, à la faiblesse des poètes qui sont les plus faibles des hommes,

de naissance ils sont la faille, la paille, le point sensible, faiblesse inscrite dans les molécules de leur chair,

du tout début leur vie est destinée à être un reflux ; elle découvrira les plages lisses où personne n'osera poser le pied, minces miroirs, étonnement des années.

September 2, 1977—Paris

Eleven AM in the Champ de Mars gardens
the first sunny days of September 1977,
careful Japanese stepping back noiselessly on the lawn
all their cameras aimed at the Tower,

—infirm, because of approaching old age, because of the weak coffee they serve at the hotel, mainly because I have been infirm in spite of what was believed by all, except one or two,

I think of the infirmity of the infirm, of the infirmity of poets who are the most infirm of all people,

from the cradle they are frail, they are the flaw, the sore point, infirmity is inscribed in the molecules of their flesh,

from the beginning their life is fated to be an ebb-tide; it will show sleek beaches where no one will dare set foot, thin mirrors, wonder of the years.

March 25, 1980

Why so much seclusion in the veneration for wine? Because it does not harbor the least human noise. Seldom are works cured of their authors' faces, undefiled by the drivel of history. A poem, a crushed car, which is the wonder, the power of the compressor, or a wink from heaven? Wine extracts from man exactly what it needs to live and immediately spurns the artist's hands. Then it shines, bare, relieved, silent, clear—god.

Our paragon the vine grower, always a denier, from vine-pruning to lees-fining. His work done, off he goes.

May 5, 1980

Eyes that were nothing before the fountaineer look where we drank our being. For being is a matter of chance too, it emerges not only at the point of procreation, but on each day that light is shed. To breathe in its lasting gaze, the oceanic horizon surging between two hills at a bend in the vacation road—giving me being for the whole day.

I met the ebb, I meet the flow. An oak twig swinging gently with its four half-spread leaves is as charged with truth as the entire void, at the end of the ebb, is filled with joy.

May 17, 1980—Noirmoutier

Through the hotel window, masts swaying lazily. Across the street, the channel of the port. Why are we moved by boats? Because they emphasize the sea's presence. And by the sea? Because it makes evident the limit's mystery. The agony of mind is to ponder the world's limit—but the shore is the absolute limit, beginning of another mind.

Before I knew the world for the metaphysical scandal that it is, and having been educated by honest folk, I used to say that I did not

want to be party to the evil done throughout the world. You bet! Even then I stayed involved in the world's scandal.

To be the shore is the poet's privilege. The blind sun however knows neither world nor metaworld. Neither emotion, nor limit, not even poetry, its morganatic daughter. No road leads to it.

July 13, 1980

Raymond Dumay: "You will wonder when I say you have to suffer while drinking Château Margaux! . . . Moreover in the beginning it will not give you half the pleasure to be found in a nice rosé from Provence."

Writing is like wine. While the sun of successive drafts gravitates around the bottom of the night where it dwells, it sheds the first aromas of obviousness, closes up, and gives a wide berth to common understanding. It will not come and fetch you.

June 29, 1981

The dog rose overturned by the burden of its own shoots stands again, held up by a string. The herd of roses full-blown in the morning sun shakes all over while I tighten the last knot to the peg. Do not look further for the be-all and end-all, the base, the absolute beginning of things and acts, here it is: the dog rose fallen and erect again, history in its entirety.

June 7, 1982

The leafy oak sprig fluttering at your window is from a tree in paradise. A phone call attests to the thorough and everlasting fraternity. Like Eluard, you read liberty in the white sailing clouds.

And yet it is neither your life, nor the world, nor people that are given voice here. Inspiration lifts you, breathes into you the wind of joy, and you, flute. . .

Is it then an illusion of life, of the world, of people? Ah! I know you here for the man of knowledge you were trained to be. To give birth, that is what you are doing, inspiration as procreator. When you give birth, the leafy oak sprig is from a tree in paradise since the beginning.

October 25, 1983

The surface road: everyday drudgery broken by sulphur-mines blooming suddenly at three AM or at dawn—after coffee. Blazing faults telling of the thinner bark. And the deep road: the slow drifting, the collapse that rarifies being into an ogive where the sun resides, an arch of the bridge over the roaring. . . Ogive and bridge that will be before long only moldy scenery on the dump.

October 17, 1984

The red half-circle was fixed on the far edge of the ocean the instant I arrived in Lestreved. The whole expanse of water was steeled with white, glaring plates gliding ahead of the curling waves. Though they rolled swiftly toward the beach, they were the very image of all that is undoubted, unshaken. Then, clearly, I understood the origin of epics. What Homer first imitated was the ocean. Imitation springs from this union, from the confluence where my being and the ocean's being are two waters flowing in two beds so near that no living eye could make out more than a single vein.

September 11, 1986
—Paris, Boulevard Saint-Jacques

The trees cast their dapple-grey shadows on the clear ground of
the boulevard
(I'm staying on the 11th floor)
the walker seeks there a respite
from his business worries.

Your business anyhow is not to be the god with ten thousand
arms like so many words,
but to reside in the dappled shadows of the trees,
there you are, reduced to two dimensions,
moving slowly with the sun's progress,
drowning suddenly in a cloud's dark tide
with no other hope—in order to relieve your anxiety and make it
known—
than to write a page like this.

# GUY ETIENNE
# THE BRETON GAMBLE

*(Translated from the French by Esther Allen)*

The history of the Breton language can be summarized as 1500 years of alternating atrophy and revival, under circumstances which have rarely been favorable. Imported to Armorica from Great Britain between the 5th and 7th centuries, it was, during the 8th and 9th centuries, the most culturally developed of the Celtic languages, used as often as Latin in the monasteries. In the 10th century, at the time of the Norman occupation, it collapsed through the exodus of the ruling classes and the destruction of manuscripts. Another apogee was reached during the 15th and 16th centuries, with a well-codified literary language whose phonology, morphology, syntax and versification had been essentially preserved, but whose vocabulary was strongly influenced by French. At that point, two currents began to diverge: on the one hand, the dialects of the rural, illiterate communities, passively carrying along linguistic treasures which often waited three or four hundred years before being noticed and exploited, and on the other, the language spoken and written by literates and semi-literates, always bilingual, who took their subject matter from the cultural life of their era, as well as from the rich oratory of their own people. It is among these latter that a movement of reconstruction of the language can he traced from the 18th century into the present. This reconstruction was not carried out on the basis of the old literary language, but on the basis of the dialects. It replaced untimely borrowings from other languages by terms which were retrieved from the vernaculars, the history of the language, or even the sister language, Welsh, and it refined syntax and rationalized spelling. All of this permitted the flowering of a literature which was at first imprisoned in the organic relationship of writers to the traditional society (religious magazines, works of vulgarization, plays, novels, didactic poetry). After the first world war and the disappearance of the rural public (for whom editions of more than 20,000 copies had been common), it undertook its first modern literary project, emancipated from regionalism, bringing to the fifty readers who made up its original public the masterpieces of world literature, and publishing works by poets and prose writers which were in their turn translated into English, German, the other Celtic languages, and French. After World War II, this neo-Breton

moves from the realm of literature into everyday life. Some young couples choose to bring up their children in the language. The objective now is for the public schools not only to teach the language, but to teach in the language all classes from primary school to the university. A lexical explosion takes place, wherein neology takes precedence over borrowing, and thousands of new terms are born every year. The movement benefits from a change in public opinion which, indifferent or hostile during the second quarter of the century, suddenly takes up the cause of the Breton language like a banner. Elected officials of all stripes make it a point of honor to grant subventions to bilingual kindergartens and primary schools, and banks promise their support for scholarly editions. The phenomenon takes place, nonetheless, on a very minor scale. The last dialects are vanishing in a society which has been completely taken over by French, and the number of people who have made Breton their everyday mode of speech is estimated at not more than a few hundred.

Who can say why young people, at each generation, devote their lives to a language that is practically extinct? The young people themselves? But the motives they allege are unconvincing, even contradictory. "It is simply because of an order by one of my superiors," says one of them, "to help, by this means, our young monks and several zealous clergymen of the country translate their French sermons into Breton, so as to preach to the people of the lower province, most of whom do not speak the French language, but who, nonetheless, avidly thirst for the Word of God." Thus did Father Grégoire de Rostrenen explain, in 1792, the motivation for his *Dictionnaire français-celtique ou français-breton*, a work which was in fact aimed at reunifying the vocabularies of the various dialects, and which abounded in terms that were either archaic or taken from the Welsh, all of them just as unknown to the "people of the lower province" as French. The precaution was useful, given that the Church in Brittany has constantly taken umbrage at the quasi-linguistic priesthood in which it sees its servants engage themselves. Father Rostrenen's ruse parallels the oaths of allegiance to France that have been sworn by other cultural militants suspected of autonomism. The justifications proffered by those not held back by fear of Church or State almost always come down to ethnocentrism, be it romantic, nationalist, proletarian or ecologist. The theses formulated by observers are hardly more satisfying. For a certain sociologist, it represents the revindication of an identity menaced by the modern world through translation into a neo-archaism; for a certain psychologist, a return by the repressed person following the trauma which stifled the maternal language. These explanations do account for one aspect of the reality: certainly there exist in Brittany, as in other places, people who have not emerged well from the traditional world of the past and who venerate, with resentment, its vestiges, including the last dialects. But what can be said of the children who for fifty years have

been the first to use neo-Breton as their everyday language, and whose parents, born in the cities, often cannot point to a single speaker of Breton among their ancestors for centuries back? Nothing: none of it can be understood as long as the language is understood as a lost object to be found or as a patrimony to be preserved. Breton owes the fact that it is still here, against all historical logic, not to those who guard it, but to those who make it, those for whom its presence matters less than its possibilities, and its possibilities *as* a language matter less than what is made possible *by* the language.

I can think of only one other phenomenon that is as resistant to explanation: poetry. This is not a coincidence. What makes a language live? The fact, doubtless, of being spoken. But, more essentially, the inadequacy which compels its speakers to reinvent it at every moment. Between the abyss of a language's fundamental impotence experienced by the poet, and the gaps that every speaker tries to minimize in his or her everyday discourse, there is only a difference of degree. The same wind blows over them, they appeal to the same *poiein*. Ultimately, the life of a language is the poetry which operates deep within it. An example: In 1965, French borrowed the words *hardware* and *software* from American English and, in 1974, replaced them with *matériel* and *logiciel*. How should this lexical fabrication—while other languages made do with the American words—be interpreted? As a reactionary chauvinism? Or as a creation, a *poïèse*, pushing off from the American into a leap towards originality, with innumerable unexpected results: *progiciel* (software package), *ludiciel* (computer game), *logimétrie*, a whole new lineage of words and thought taking root, a *poem* within the fabric of the language? Another example, this one from Breton (what an occasion for poetry when a language has to cover several centuries in a few decades!): François Vallée (1860-1949), initiator of the modern Breton neology—but who was prudent enough to pass off his innovations as restorations—explained, in the 1920s, the opposition between the adjectival suffixes *-el* and *-ek* as an opposition between extension and comprehension. *"Doueelezh* is 'divinity' in the sense of the nature of God; *doueegezh*, formed from *doueek*, one who has something of 'god,' of the 'divine,' thus means 'divinity,' the 'divine' in people. Mirabeau's celebrated apostrophe: 'There is no divinity in you, Barnave!' could be rendered with great precision into Breton by: *'N'eus ket a zoueegezh* (sic) *ennout!'" (Grand dict. fr.-br.*, 1931). The opposition existed in a diffused, isolated way in Breton as it exists in other languages (French: *pondéral/pondéreux)*. But no one before Vallée had privileged it to the point of giving it concrete expression in the language's morphology, making it a significant function and a basis for thought. Once stated, it was welcomed as an indispensable enrichment by speakers of Breton, who began to use it as if it had been part of the language's body from time

immemorial. A singular performance gave rise to the formation of a new competence. To speak a language is to reorient it continually and permanently: here or there something emerges within it in the same way a poem is made. The poet, too, circles around the poem in progress until the instant in which he or the feels it to be finished. And this feeling signals the achievement of the competence whose inaugural performance is the poem.

Spoken language, written language? Can one go without the other? A language which is only spoken has no existence outside of the group which speaks it. A language only written dies from lack of social nourishment. For a century, Breton has had to navigate between these two dangers. The dialects of the 19th century benefited from the stability of the rural areas where they were spoken and, to a certain extent, from the influence of literates, principally the clergy, who were themselves influenced by the literary language which was in the process of being unified. It is clear to us, *a posteriori*, that this configuration was historically condemned, and in any case ethically condemnable. I will explain: The dialect speaker's relationship with the exterior world functioned by assimilation or rejection. Either speakers of dialects repulsed the culture of the cities and the bearers of that culture—which was, for the Church, the culture born from the Revolution—or else they assimilated themselves to it by denying their own culture. The dialect's mode of speech was a code integrated into the ensemble of social codes; there was no gap between the structures of speech and social structures; to infringe on the rules of speech was to undermine morality; a free language led to dissolute morals. The space of speech and the space of society were one; from this came the localism of the spoken dialects and the weakness of their geolinguistic cohesion: each of the tribes that were the parishes tended to possess its own sub-dialect. French exerted its pressure not through borrowed words, but by breaking and entering: local forms were juxtaposed with forms from outside, and the stratum of speech which was linked to modern life first confined the archaic stratum to private interactions and then eliminated it. So, in the case we are looking at, there is not a relationship of species to genre in accordance with the classic definition of dialect as "the local form of a language." The contemporary authors who love to move their readers to nostalgia over the lost paradise of the traditional world neglect to mention the chasm that separates them from it, the intellectual liberty acquired by leaving it behind, and, above all, the acquisition of a language which enables them to talk about it. For the existence of a language implies a separation between speech and society; a language has its own, isotropic, unlimited space, emancipated from geography, determined only by the free circulation of its words. Speakers of a language experience a relationship of identification and differentiation. They establish the unity of their mode of speech in the

mirror of other languages. The creators of French identified their dialect with Latin, and the more they identified it, the more it was differentiated first from Latin, then from itself, to become, in its turn, a language. This emergence of one language by pushing off from another is also at the origin of English, German. . .and Breton. It was by identifying their dialects with French that the pioneers of Breton differentiated them from it and differentiated from these dialects a newborn language, free from localism and unified (to the scandal of regionalists who denounced it as an attack on "the sacred language of our fathers"). The most solid criterion of a language is that its speakers maintain a distance from it, a relationship of foreignness which guarantees the independence of their speech.

The turmoil of the first world war precipitated the degradation of the dialects and deprived traditional literates of their clientele. The handful of intellectuals who took over and pushed the language into a qualitative leap forward found themselves dramatically cut off from the mass of Breton speakers. All of them were writers and it was not until after the second world war that modern Breton became a spoken language. Despite the small official existence it has achieved (road signs, deliberations of elected officials) the question remains: does neo-Breton have any chance of carving out a place for itself in this world? It is improbable. But, I would add, in the same way that poetry is improbable. The lives of languages—contemporary history does not contradict this—are completely unpredictable. As a social fact, the language depends on politics and economics. As a poetic fact, it is an opening to all possibilities.

*One of Marina Tsvetaeva's phrases is her time gathered into a gaze—a crystal which agitates the entirety of my time, gathers it into a gaze, incontestably mine, and hers by a passage beyond being, a filiation, a jubilant disappropriation.* I first wrote this in Breton. Where I say *time (temps)* I first put *hoalt*, or "duration of life"—each term is inadequate in a different way, each demands poetry from the reader to reduce the gap. To learn a language is to learn poetry; they are one and the same.

This essay first appeared in *L'Âne*, no. 43, July–September 1990, Paris.

# DONALD REVELL
# THREE POEMS

## THE LESSON OF THE CLASSICS

The remaining oracles were obscene,
like unfolding a towel and finding maggots there
and the next moment a detonation of green

flies. So many sexual martyrs had tied
machinery to their sallow backs, their weedy
shoulders, hoping monstrousness might revise

the brutal logarithm of excess
tenderness, of man and woman with a daughter
who must die, of government that must undress

the condemned in open court before they die.
The love of honor became murder.
Human, purposeful embraces at night

became machinery on a martyr's back.
If you have a family, starve them.
If your passport lies open on the desk

of a stranger, man or woman it makes no difference,
your life ended an hour ago.
There on the desk, your inverted face

in the passport photo sobs and twists
farewell as if it were already on fire.
If you have a daughter, you kissed

her for the last time an hour ago.
They are strapping something to her back,
the shape of an olive tree, the size of snow.

Her infant spittle beads like mercury
on the temple pavement. She is an oracle,
the nude, last sibyl of many victories.

## AND NOTHING BUT

It is a white train
sees and makes it darker.
Oh sustain it.
I am in the wires.

What happens in the light of institutions remains profound, though pleased too easily. The message and the man's head fingered in soap scum fade at one distance, at the same speed. Will later drown himself in Paris, in the yellow of institutions, pared down to a single holocaust fluorescent pipe.

Mister
unsaid goes to the grave,
then everything.
The use of talking
is vocable in nightmare,
perhaps only there.

An American life in five acts and an assassination. I hear the conversation filter up to my apartment. We remember the twentieth century as a tunnel of screens and filters. At the end, we were pure and indistinguishable from the next man, nothing to do with yellow cipher afloat in Paris. I just ran through my photographs to see.

The rain a much finer net
belongs to the past.
The calendar of flowers,

abyss all that you can find,
does not understand
such a reproach
such lewdness.

Her clinic is her red mane. Something filtered through her skin onto mine. The life instead of a life glides, glides, the unwanted child always the most histrionic. No more surprising than the leaves fall, sky empties at the last when the air is flawless. I am in the wires.

## ANNIVERSARY OF MANY CITIES

Darkness undrew the air where it was naked,
poppy and dramaturge, flower and firebomb.
Too much innocence survived.
Something remnant, twilight without end
on the receding cockpits, tainted
the alcohol of orphancy. Every wall
was a shafthouse, every plume of smoke a woman
lewdly photographed by her kinsmen.

I live on credit.
I love a man, and he is meat.
I love a woman, and she is red hair,
a plume of smoke who loves me longer.
All over Europe, restorations proceed
and make a sound exactly nothing, a tone
between a whine and a detonation.

Whoever minted the coin of total war
made everything else worthless, counterfeit.
Take it to the madhouse or take it to bed,
it is still war. Getting and spending
are war. Because there is no such thing
as immortality, sufficient unto the day
are its casualties.
What does not die deserves to live.

# PAM REHM
# VASES AND ARRANGEMENTS

I.

the first rung of the ladder
it is the unbedding of the always

yet how much I haven't forgiven you
your continuous page work  your pigeon

ignorance  hurt in night set in
what arrives  returned from a trapping trip

returned, presumed to cook this
delighted  rare  Good morning

the keys don't let me in
and why the blanket you ask

pulled close  what is hiding
the breath with everything pushed

together  skin something out
let the heart know a purpose

the why a bruise takes attention to
heal

II.

there was something in your letter
where I couldn't find you my
all cold passion  6:15 need to go
to the bathroom my sadness is that an
introduction has left me in care of a

person I lock myself to attend
neglected food what it didn't taste now
is like a dream something wrong there where
I can't be going to clear set clear not
spores obviously medicine image unabridged
expense account I was once sadder wanting
for someone else's happiness

III.

the street walk rush and time
on the way to being an appointment

just got here and the rain walking and
so what if I'm no poet that I have

all this resistance to put
down something other than my head

to bed and this rain and wash drawing
damp and the hers always telling

each other things about what's going on in
someone else's life not the right way

of the story everyone becomes a picture
in the imagination of someone they

don't know so tell me why what is this
special need and pierced lipness

why do we make ourselves into gods
so wanting a thought we think deserves

our silence give me a break I don't
want the tensions and the secrets and

misconceptions and stories that haven't
happened the exaggerations the

games what is all this
anyway  the extension is what I want

to be held out of small causes

# JOHANNA DRUCKER
# SUSAN BEE: ARCANE PAINTING

A quality of enigma is produced in Susan Bee's paintings which is the combined effect of a reduced vocabulary of iconic forms existing in tension with the rich textures of the highly worked painterly surface. Her imagery condenses into an array of icons—vases, birds, heads, figures, and mass-produced decals—all of which are compellingly available to reading as metaphors. But the intensity of her painted surfaces continually emphasizes that these works are investigations of problems in *painting*. Eschewing the classical goals of *solutions* or resolutions, Bee permits her work to remain engaged with process, change, and mutability.

In nearly twenty years of professional activity, Susan Bee has gone through a variety of stylistic and thematic evolutions. She was born and raised in New York City and is co-editor of the feminist-oriented art critical journal *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* (which she co-founded with Mira Schor in 1986). As an artist and graphic designer, she has made photoworks, collages, artist's books and book covers, as well as paintings. The paintings presented here were all produced in the last five years. Offering a range of approaches which may ultimately be seen as sharply defined facets of a totality, the work coheres from painting to painting as a series of tangential or oblique moves within the total *oeuvre* which is clearly marked by changes in treatment of surface as well as by the reorientation of thematic concerns. Recognizing that each piece represents a particular problem in realizing an image through the working of pigment on surface—and that setting such problems is part of the challenge Bee has set for herself—allows the seemingly irreconcilable differences among her works to be understood within a unified practice. Links in iconography are readily apparent across the whole of her work, and the synthetic dynamic of the two aspects (iconography/paint) embodies the fundamental issue of painting—the relation between imagery and surface, the readable image and the phenomenological visuality of the work.

Scraped, dripped, glazed, impastoed, crayoned—the surfaces of these paintings display the full range of painterly possibilities. Rather than adopt a *style* of painting in which the paint is relegated to a particular mode or treatment, Bee forces her stylistic parameters to include any and all

possibilities. As a result the surfaces are extremely varied: from nearly transparent glazes sitting on the surface of the canvas, to the thickly encrusted impasto embodying layers of accrued activity—the record of decisions, revisions, and continual efforts to define the image out of the basic material of pigment in oil. Erasure also plays a significant part in the record of experience whose history results in these final surfaces, the scraped-out-rubbed-and-painted-over attempt to remove and obliterate an image whose trace persists in the palimpsest remains. The only mode of working which does *not* show up here is that which effaces itself. There are no slick, flat, unmarked surfaces and no glib *trompe l'oeil* illusions in these paintings: they are all about *work*, about *craft*, the hand, the brush, the knife, and about paint as a *physical*—not merely visual—material.

In one of the earliest paintings included here, *Otranto*, (1985), a classical influence is clearly displayed not only in the Piero inspired head but also in the academic nude, drawn from a figure study, reproduced in the well-drawn manner of a long-standing tradition. Floating unanchored in an indeterminate green space, "emptied out to allow light and air into the painting," these images detach themselves and fix the eye with the insistent autonomy of emblems. Characteristic of Bee's work, these images ask to be read, seem to offer themselves to that linguistic play which attempts to fix the meaning of the visual in some verbal equivalent, while the quality of elusiveness which prevents such fixing depends upon their visual aspect. Head to body, man to woman, masculine principle of dominance to feminine principle of submission, part to whole, presence to absence—or fixed male to free floating female—expressionless face to emotive body—the categories of association are numerous. But the minimalism of this image, its *reduced* diminution of means, pushes to extreme the sense of both inherent meaning and resistance to its determination.

From this most minimal of works to the more maximal involves not merely a leap in terms of *degree* of information to be reckoned with, but in terms of the types and categories of visual information offered up in the diverse panoply of canvases. *Mr. Bugs Goes to Town*, (1983-85), for instance, wrenches the uncomfortable imagery of Fleischer brothers cartoons into conflict with the simple terms of a normative figuration, a monster insect whose synthetic features confront aesthetic tradition with the same relentless harshness as its stinger exerts on the diminished female figure receiving its punitive assault. These images do not belong in the same world or work. The bug's fabricated fantastic mode is impossible in the same space as the delicately poised pair whose personal enigma is already staged within other terms—her being on the chair, his addressing us from the canvas—a question posed, poised, awaiting resolution, which is forever and immediately deferred by the graphic activity of the insect, the

stinging action splattering its violent effect all over the scene in an act of fatal disruption. Types of images may be in conflict as well as elements within an image; and the conflicts thus inscribed bear no translation, they remain insistently coded according to the visual means by which the discrete elements obtain their identity. These elements "form a narrative, tell a story, though a wacky, possibly enigmatic, unresolved one," as Bee puts it. The conflicts sustained in these images are of this order: a conflict of types, of categories, of visual codes, conventions and traditions.

But all is not conflict: there is another form of *a*logic which obtains in certain of these works, such as *Evasive Vases*, (1988), which partakes of the more familiar conventions of the surrealist mode. Here the fragmentary parts (which could be traced in Bee's work from an earlier activity, at least to the group of works she calls "flood paintings" from the late 1970s in which elements were detached and floating, overwhelmed by the rush of strokes which cascaded as the racing tides of a watery field around them) are carefully, seamlessly combined into new forms. The vase as vessel as mother as daughter as womb as one to be filled the other to be emptied works its motifs through conventions which necessarily invoke their reading as "an animated still-life" in a Jungian psychoanalytic mode, one in which the various possibilities for the literal image are played out through its figurative associations.

The visual problems set in Bee's recent works revolve around the presence of the decals, whose synthetic peculiarities push the issues posed by *Mr. Bugs* to another level. Innocuous images, sweet in the artificial mode of cancerous substitutes, innocent in accord with the repressed violence of commercial production, these fatuous pieces of cliched visual culture refuse to be accommodated by the traditions of oil painting at even its Pop extreme. In a sinister manner these icons, at once banal and nightmarishly threatening, betray their easy consumption through subversive means. In *Plummeting Pheasant* a Raggedy Ann wears the dismembered wing of the free-falling pheasant like a child's wild Indian headdress, grabbed with abandon and flung onto her head with careless and complete disregard for its effect or consequences. The pheasant, its streamlined body robbed of the means of flight, falls endlessly, swiftly, through a turbulent atmosphere. In no world is this a right image: violent, monstrous, and at the same time, decorative, its contradictions are not merely internal, formal ones, but project outward to the realm in which these elements may be produced to exist in the same world while their frames of reference are so impossibly at odds.

There is an effect of cancelling which takes place when the icons of mass-produced culture combine with the personal iconography of painting. The decal paintings, even more than the earlier synthetic, fragmented works of Susan Bee, insist upon the visual fact of these conflicted relations

among elements of contemporary culture. The unacceptable character of the decals, their very evident *not belonging* to the world of paint, pushes the problems of their presence not only in these paintings but as the central focus of the works, to a critical extreme. Either they are there and the painting activity which surrounds them is incidental, not there, to be cancelled, or they are not there, and the painting activity is to be integrated around their absence. To support the two activities in one visual space is to support a conceptual contradiction through visual means which is almost impossible to recognize, let alone sustain.

Another feature of the decal paintings is their insistent relation to *taste* which has been an active feature of art practice since Pop Art and the subsequent East Village art scene. In a work like *Monster Mitt* (1990), the boundaries of taste are pushed into that kitschy, tacky, childhood domain associated with the work of artists such as Jeff Koons, Mike Kelley and Donald Baechler. While Bee was never a part of the East Village scene, her sensibility draws simultaneously on many of the same categories of aesthetic investigation: the "bad taste" quoting of mass-produced work, an appropriation—and appreciation—of commercially made folk-faux-naive images which still causes shivers of discomfort in those viewers who harbor (secretly or no) residual strains of an old high art set of aesthetic values. Bee goes beyond the mere appropriation of these kitsch elements—cartoon figures in particular—and consistently endows each with a persona, a character, a role to play in the theatrically staged narratives of her invention. Thus the post-Pop imagery of a Kenny Scharf or Julie Wachtel, though echoed, is taken out of the realm of mere image/icon pattern in Bee's work, and the figures charged with the scenario tensions of precisely scripted *dramatis personae.* But this pushing against boundaries places Bee squarely among those artists who continually challenge the viability of defending a border determining an "inside" or "outside" to what is currently defined as "art"—and to the modernist's legacy (legislation) against kitsch.

Bee's work also harks back to certain artists she cites as models, if not actual influences: the threatening quality of *Monster Mitt,* despite its whimsy, recalls the dark forebodings of Ryder, Fuseli, Redon, Hartley, De Chirico and the late Guston. Her work displays this Symbolist legacy, in its supersaturation of values, overdetermined resonance of the iconic imagery, dreamlike, enigmatic, almost alchemical in its manipulated combinations. Again, there are particular qualities which distinguish Bee's work from that of either predecessors or contemporaries: the images are always about interactions, about the space of exchange *between* character/icons: as in *Monster Mitt* where the possessed looking hound, his bland sweet face surrounding the hot, blank holes of his eyes, is held continually suspended in his green egg chamber, vibrating with violet, above the heated orange

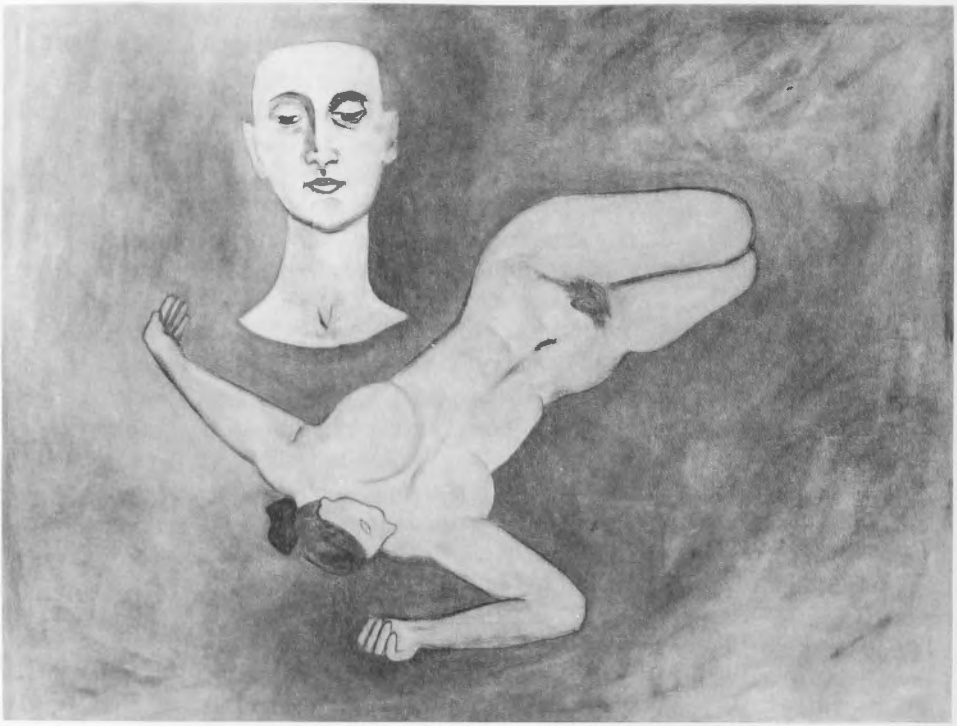
ellipse containing our sweet Raggedy Ann, who demurely displays her skirt in the socially coded gesture of the childishly feminine. Issues of gender weave through Bee's *oeuvre*, but as they are embedded in the lived narratives of social roles and exchanges. The insidious character of conversations proceeds from the assumed positions assigned to women/men in the shifting scheme of things. Her feminism is neither polemical nor orthodox, but like the rest of her thematics and imagery, unassignable to a simple category where it might rest comfortably labelled.

Artificial silk flowers serve to collage the Symbolist fascination with blooms onto the suggestive surface of the works *Trellis* (1989) and *Two Women* (1990). Here the lyrical movement of forms through female bodies and floral motifs revives the style of late 19th-century pre-Raphaelite work. In fact Bee used 19th-century models for these paintings—a Courbet work and then a piece of engraved clip art—which determined their compositional arrangement. But the painting quality, even the shift of the palette into softer faded roses, aqua, teal and violets is consistent with that sensibility and its overtly feminized forms and tones. The flowers affixed to these canvases, plastic, silk, cloth, the stuff of dime stores and floral display, achieve a poetic lyricism which contradicts their crass mass produced origins, again forcing the issue of paint and object, visual ontology and iconographic reference, into interesting territory. Or, as Bee comments, "The blatantly false flowers also undermine the romanticism adding a sardonic, ironic, or sarcastic layer to the saccharine sweetness of the portrayals of 19th-century women." Here the issue is resolution, rather than its impossibility: the flowers are recuperated by their capacity to be part of the image as well as existing in a space, real space, which separates them from it.

In sum, then, the means which Bee disposes into the making of her works necessarily requires that the critical assessment and investigation be equally flexible, polymorph and varied in its capacity to reckon with the issues posed by her practice. These works all share an arcane quality, a resistant hieroglyphic imagery which by its reductive formal definition permits any number of possible readings. Not fixed by set horizons, or locked into readily available narrative readings or conventional arrangements of still lifes, genre paintings, or figure groupings, the paintings make use of the recognizable imagery of each of these genres within a continually inventive struggle with manners of painterly (and now *not* painterly) production. Sometimes the images come first, and sometimes the painting evokes the images. This ambiguity, this sitting on the fence between the figurative image and the painting activity remains visible in the final product, those replete surfaces which seem encoded with the transformation from deep structure suggestion to surface icon. Guided by humor and a whimsical character, these paintings retain all their contradictory impulses,

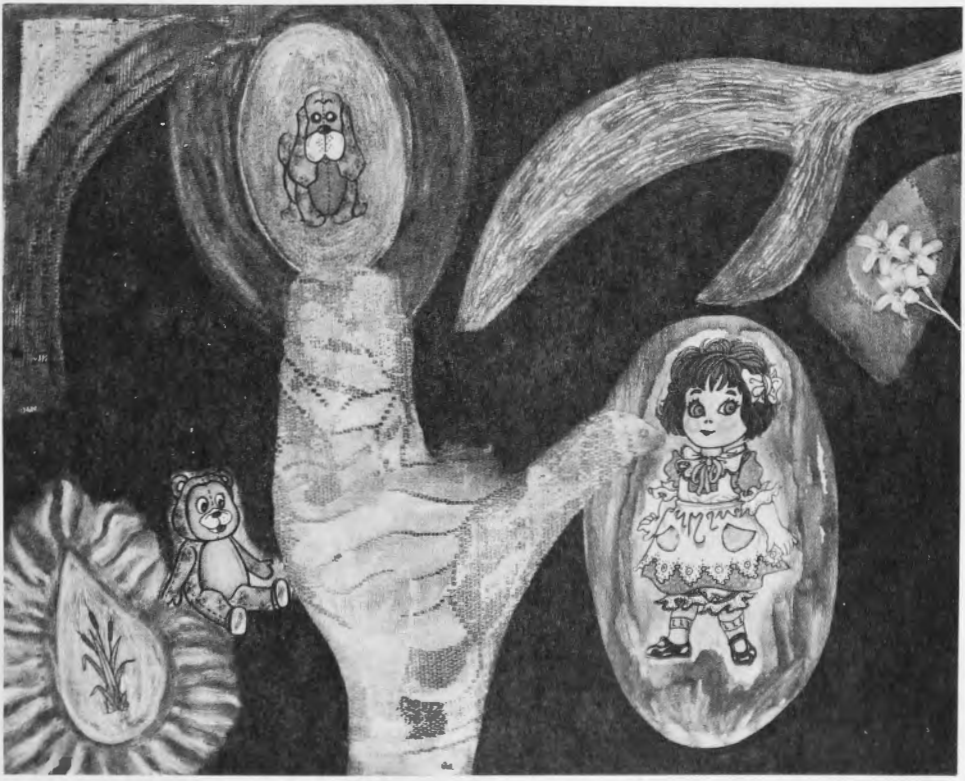
their irreconcilable oppositions, their passages of lyrical synthesis and happy accident. These works are a contemporary and veritable pastiche of elements whose textures and images draw on the full range of visual possibilities from the arcane, the academic, the banal, and the vernacular. Layered into/onto surfaces which paint into and out of the irreconcilable differences present in that broad spectrum of visual imagery, they reveal a highly personal inclination betraying its idiosyncratic character at every stroke, the humor and peculiar intelligence of a painter willing to entertain all manner of contradiction in the full pleasure of her engagement with the activity of painting.

# SUSAN BEE
## SIX PAINTINGS



**OTRANTO**

40" x 50", Oil on Canvas, 1984
(photo credit: Adam Reich)



**MONSTER MITT**

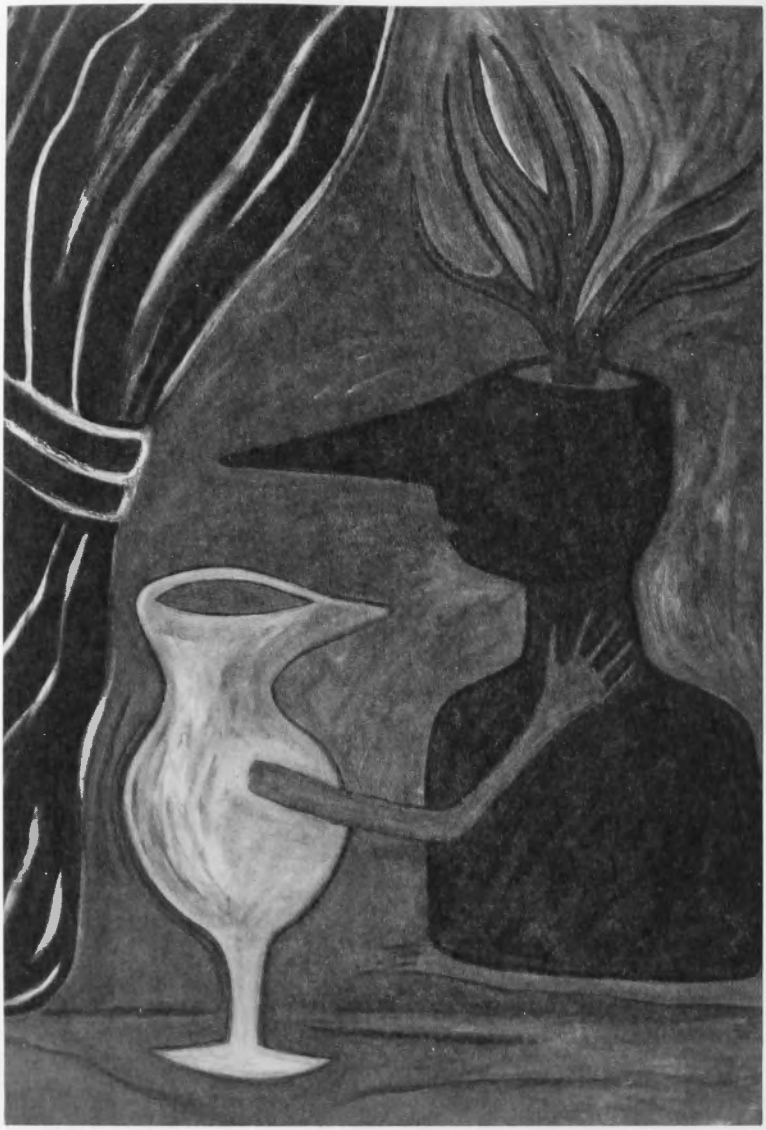
16" x 20", Oil & Collage on Linen, 1990
(photo credit: Pelka/Noble Photography)

**TWO WOMEN**

30" x 24", Oil & Collage on Linen, 1990
(photo credit: Pelka/Noble Photography)

**MR. BUGS GOES TO TOWN**

24" x 36", Oil on Canvas, 1983–85
(photo credit: Pelka/Noble
Photography)



**EVASIVE VASES**

52" x 36", Oil on Linen, 1988
(photo credit: Pelka/Noble Photography)

**PLUMMETING PHEASANT**

36" x 34", Oil & Collage on Linen, 1990
(photo credit: Pelka/Noble Photography)

# CHRIS STROFFOLINO
## NOT NEVER, BUT NOT NOW

If things are only what they seem, I never think
Unless we feel. If lake CHARGOGGAGOGGMANCHAUGGAG—
OGGCHAUBUNAGUNGAMAUGG is a mirage, it's okay that
Sex is masturbation and, like a teacher who doesn't
Lose his job for being liked by the students he
Wouldn't give A's to, you don't have to spread
Yourself thin to be both most real and most interesting.

If words were not imported, the daughter of the nectarine
Would be a peach, the son of a beach the desert of selves,
The land someone who can't swim (but that doesn't mean
He can walk) first mistakes for water, shells no longer
Hollow enough to hear the ocean in. A wire mesh mother
Feeds the formula of ideas purged of stories I'd have
To make to find—much to the dismay of those who think
The only way to kill their hatred is to kill their enemy.

If I am really you, then you're not really me. . .
The non-resident President feels the ceiling's the sky
And, like a chef who's glad he's not allowed to eat
His own food, becomes a country looking outward
Into what's more his than his eyes because to possess it
You must kill it and I'm not going out of my way to need you.

A mouse pokes its head out from "its" hiding place
To see if the cat of what it names
Has been scared away by the elephant of fear.
It's hot, but that doesn't mean it's soup.
It's made of something, but takes no longer
To get cold than it does to figure out what.

It's quicker to say it doesn't matter (when you
*Mean* it's okay), to turn your back, and let
The jewels that presumably only exist when
You look over your cold shoulder go batty
In the twilight someone so far behind you
He's before you, just out of sight, would not
Want to steal; not never, but not now.

"Can one live in desire without having
To sleep in the streets?" is what silence
Certainly asks, the box not bothering breaking.
It fears the stories are naked. It fears
It's wrong at last, that nature only goes so far,
That there'd be no drums without compact discs
It looks back on what's given,
Placing movement in what looks,
Wearing rubbers but forgetting its umbrella
And listens to the Conductor announcing
"We'll be late due to the train ahead"
And can only wish he said "We'll be early
Because of what's behind."

Put it on the backburner, if the flood
Isn't the only thing that drives you
Out of your mind. Neither eyeing nor eating
Will make the fruit riper so that anticipation
Can become reflecting, though the horse become
The cart can't make you water, or thinner.
It's a matter of positioning gulping down
The difference between a lover and a friend
Felt as the difference between a boat and an anchor
Until the boat is used as an anchor
And you take a night job 'cause it's cheaper than China.

A musician is not the government when
The possibility that the drug is only
Making him *feel* he sounds better
Does not prevent him from actually playing better
Nor the possibility there's no progress

Prevent him from the passion without which
He'd think he was falling behind.

Double standards divide us from the dying.
How much more justified is he who says
That he can only be empowered if he empowers
Than he who converts to Judaism so as to
Get away with being Anti-Semitic?
Feeling is the antenna of the race,
Oft unacknowledged for it needs a radio
As much as a station, but then I don't
Believe for a minute that if someone took
My ears away that I could no longer talk.

# BLAISE CENDRARS

# THE ABCs OF CINEMA; *from* THE END OF THE WORLD FILMED BY THE ANGEL OF NOTRE DAME

*(Translated from the French by Esther Allen, with Monique Chefdor)*

## THE ABCS OF CINEMA

Cinema. Whirlwind of movement in space. Everything falls. The sun falls. We fall in its wake. Like a chameleon, the human mind camouflages itself, camouflaging the universe. The world. The globe. The two hemispheres. Leibniz' monads and Schopenhauer's representation. My will. The cardinal hypotheses of science end in a sharp point and the four calculators cumulate. Fusion. Everything opens up, tumbles down, blends in today, caves in, rises up, blossoms. Honor and money. Everything changes. Change. Morality and political economy. New civilization. New humanity. The digits have created an abstract, mathematical organism, useful gadgets, intended to serve the senses' most vulgar needs, and that are the brain's most beautiful projection. Automatism. Psychism. New commodities. Machines. And it is the machine which recreates and displaces the sense of direction, and which finally discovers the sources of sensibility like the explorers Livingston, Burton, Speke, Grant, Baker, and Stanley, who located the sources of the Nile. But it is an anonymous discovery to which no name can be attached. What a lesson! And what do the celebrities and the stars matter to us! A hundred worlds, a thousand movements, a million dramas simultaneously enter the range of the eye with which cinema has endowed man. And, though arbitrary, this eye is more marvelous than the multi-faceted eye of a fly. The brain is overwhelmed by it. An uproar of images. Tragic unity is displaced. We learn. We drink. Intoxication. Reality no longer makes any sense. It has no significance. Everything is rhythm, word, life. No more need to demonstrate. We are in communion. Focus the lens on the hand, the corner of the mouth, the ear, and drama emerges, expands on a background of luminous mystery. Already there is no more need for dialogue, soon characters will he judged useless. At high speed the life of flowers is Shakespearean; all of classicism is present in the slow motion flexing of biceps. On screen the slightest effort becomes painful, musical, and insects and microbes look like our most illustrious contemporaries. Eternity in the ephemeral. Gigantism. It is granted an aesthetic

value which it has never had before. Utilitarianism. Theatrical drama, its situation, its devices, becomes useless. Attention is focussed on the sinister lowering of the eyebrows. On the hand covered with criminal callouses. On a bit of fabric which bleeds continually. On a watch-fob which stretches and swells like the veins at the temples. Millions of hearts stop beating at the same instant in all the capitals of the world and gales of laughter rack the countryside in far-flung villages. What is going to happen? And why is the material world impregnated with humanity? To such a point! What potential! Is it an explosion or a Hindu poem? Chemistries blend and dissolve. The least pulsation germinates and bears fruit. Crystallizations come to life. Ecstasy. Animals, plants and minerals are ideas, emotions, digits. A number. As in the Middle Ages, the rhinoceros is Christ; the bear, the devil; jasper, vivacity; chrysoprase, pure humility. 6 and 9. We see our brother the wind and the ocean is an abyss of men. And this is not abstract, obscure and complicated symbolism, it is part of a living organism that we startle, flush out, pursue, and which had never before been seen. Barbaric evidence. Sensitive depths in an Alexandre Dumas drama, a detective novel or a banal Hollywood film. Over the audience's heads, the luminous cone quivers like a cetacean. Characters, beings and things, subjects and objects stretch out from the screen in the hearth of the magic lantern. They plunge, turn, chase each other, encounter each other with fatal, astronomical precision. A beam. Rays. The prodigious thread of a screw from which everything is whirled in a spiral. Projection of the fall of the sky. Space. Captured life. Life of the depths. Alphabet. Letter. ABC. Sequence and close-up. *What is ever seen is never seen.** What an interview! "When I began to take an interest in cinematography, film was a commercial and industrial novelty. I've put all my energies into expanding it and raising it to the level of a human language. My only merit consists in having been able to find the first two letters of this new alphabet which is still far from complete: the *cut-back** and the *close-up**," David Wark Griffith, the world's foremost director declares to me. "Art at the movies? Great Art?" responds Abel Gance, France's foremost director, to a journalist who came to watch him at work in Nice. "Perhaps we could have made it that from the beginning. But first we had to learn the visual alphabet ourselves, before speaking and believing in our power; then we had to teach this elementary language." Carlyle wanted to trace the origin of the modern world back to the legendary founder of the city of Thebes, to Cadmus. As he imported the Phoenician alphabet into Greece, Cadmus invented writing and the book. Before him, writing, mnemonic, ideographic or phonetic, was always pictorial—from prehistoric man to the Egyptians, from the drawings which grace the walls of stone-age caves to hieroglyphics, the hieratic, traced on

* In English in the original.

stone tablets, or the demotic, painted on ceramics, by way of the pictographs used by Eskimos and Australian aborigines, the Red Skins' colorful tattoos and the embroidery on Canadian wampum, the ancient Mayans' decorative quipus and the burls of the forest tribes of central Africa, the Tibetan, Chinese and Korean calligrammes—writing, even cuneiform writing, was above all else an aid to memory, a memorial to a sacred initiation: autocratic, individual. Then comes the black marketeer Cadmus, the magus, the magician, and immediately writing becomes an active, living thing, the ideal democratic nourishment, and the common language of the spirit. FIRST WORLD REVOLUTION. Human activity redoubles, intensifies. Greek civilization spreads. It embraces the Mediterranean. Commercial conquest and the literary life go hand in hand. The Romans engrave their history on copper or pewter plates. There's a library in Alexandria. The Apostles and the Holy Fathers write on parchment. Propaganda. Finally, painting interpenetrates the Christian world and, during the 14th century, Jan van Eyck of Bruges invents oil painting. Adam and Eve, naked. SECOND WORLD REVOLUTION. In 1438, Korster prints with wood blocks in Harlem. Six years later, Jean Gensfleisch, known as Gutenberg, invents the mobile letter, and thirteen years later Schoeffer casts that letter in metal. With Caxton, printing intensifies. There is a deluge of books. Everything is reprinted and translated, the monastic missals and the writings of the ancients. Sculpture, drama and architecture are reborn. Universities and libraries proliferate. Christopher Columbus discovers a new world. Religion splits in two. There is much general progress in commerce. Industry constructs boats. Fleets open up faraway markets. The antipodes exist. Nations are formed. People emigrate. New governments are founded on new principles of liberty and equality. Education becomes democratic and culture refined. Newspapers appear. The whole globe is caught in a network of tracks, of cables, of lines—overland lines, maritime lines, air lines. All the world's peoples are in contact. The wireless sings. Work becomes specialized, above and below. THIRD WORLD REVOLUTION. And here's Daguerre, a Frenchman, who invents photography. Fifty years later, cinema was born. Renewal! Renewal! Eternal Revolution. The latest advancements of the precise sciences, world war, the concept of relativity, political convulsions, everything foretells that we are on our way toward a new synthesis of the human spirit, toward a new humanity and that a race of new men is going to appear. Their language will be the cinema. Look! The pyrotechnists of Silence are ready. The image is at the primitive sources of emotion. Attempts have been made to capture it behind outmoded artistic formulas. Finally the good fight of white and black is going to begin on all the screens in the world. The floodgates of the new language are open. The letters of the new primer jostle each other, innumerable. Everything becomes possible! The Gospel of Tomorrow, the Spirit of

Future Laws, the Scientific Epic, the Anticipatory Legend, the Vision of the Fourth Dimension of Existence, all the Interferences. Look! The revolution.

A

*On location.*

The camera which moves, which is no longer immobile, which records all levels simultaneously, which reverberates, which sets itself in motion.

B

*In the theatres.*

The spectator who is no longer immobile in his chair, who is wrenched out, assaulted, who participates in the action, who recognizes himself on the screen among the convulsions of the crowd, who shouts and cries out, protests and struggles.

C

*On earth.*

At the same time, in all the cities of the world, the crowd which leaves the theatres, which runs out into the streets like black blood, which like a powerful animal extends its thousand tentacles and with a tiny effort crushes the palaces, the prisons.

Z

*Deep in the heart.*

Watch the new generations growing up suddenly like flowers. Revolution. Youth of the world. Today.

—Paris, November 7, 1917
Rome, April 21, 1921.

## *FROM* THE END OF THE WORLD FILMED BY THE ANGEL OF NOTRE DAME

FIFTH CHAPTER
*The End of the World*

20.

Noon. The square in front of Notre-Dame. Buses circulate around the central refuge. A hearse leaves the Hotel-Dieu followed by blind veterans. A division of municipal guards is lined up in front of the barracks across the way. Busy men cut across the square in all directions. On the left bank, a line of students files past.

21.

At the first blast of the trumpet, the disk of the sun grows a notch larger, and its light weakens. All the stars appear suddenly in the sky. The moon turns visibly.

22.

The Angel of N.-D. barely puffs out his cheeks.

23.

We see passers-by covering their ears and turning their heads all the way around.

24.

All the cities in the world rise on the horizon, slide down iron tracks, fall on top of each other, pile up in the square in front of Notre-Dame.

25.

The sun immobilizes. It is one minute past noon.

26.

Instantly, everything that has been erected by men collapses onto those still living and entombs them. Only those things which had a semblance of mechanical life last two seconds longer. We see trains still rolling with the last of their impetus, machines running in neutral, airplanes falling out of the sky.

27.

An immense column of dust rises straight into the sky, then splits in two, divides, settles down, whirls into a vortex, thins out into threads, stretches in all directions; the winds blast; the sea opens and closes; the mountains of Mexico stumble in the light.

## SIXTH CHAPTER
## *High Speed and Slow Motion*

28.

With the death of man and the destruction of the domestic animals, the species and genera which had been hunted reappear. The seas are repopulated with whales and the surface of the earth is invaded by an enormous vegetation.

29.

We see fallow fields greening and flowering furiously. An audacious vegetation blooms. Graminae become fibrous, woody; weeds, tall and strong, harden. Hemlock is leguminous. Shrubs appear, grow. The forests extend, and we see the plains of Europe darkening, uniformly blanketed with apalachine.

30.

In the humid air, innumerable birds are flying, their plumage heavy and sticky. The otter and the beaver proliferate in the streams. Giant insects hatch in the swamps and lay their eggs, tirelessly.

31.

The sun's disk wanes and cools again. Glaciers increase in height and expanse. We see the vicuna descending from the mountains of the South, the condors and the bears. All of them take refuge in the steppes of the far North, where a current of warm air circulates. Everything adapts to the new environment of expanse and immensity. The vicuna's legs and neck elongate. The condor's wings atrophy, and its temper. The bear grows taller, swells, peels, becomes enormous. We see a giraffe, an iguanodon, a mammoth.

32.

Then everything freezes.

The ice spreads; it invades the seas and the sky is weighted with it. The birds and the land animals are dead. On the banks of a narrow channel of tepid water, which alone remains, legless, humid beings with human faces and exterior lungs on both sides of their heads come to breathe.

33.

Again the sun enlarges and its heat increases, and we see an intense and colorful island appearing through the curtain of mists. There, in slow motion and in a strange confusion, we see the shapes of all the annihilated beings: kangaroos hop by; lemurs fly; in its death-agony the duckbilled platypus comes to the foreground and looks at us with mocking eyes; the lyre-bird performs its sexual dance; the tubercular orangutan coughs; an armadillo rolls itself into a ball.

34.

The desert. Bleached bones and immense eggshells.

35.

It rains. It rains. Everything melts. Everything dissolves. The sky and the earth. The sun drools. It stretches out in the turbulent clouds and falls with them into the mud. We see its rays decomposing in drops of water and tiny rainbows seed the earth.

36.

The sun is now very close. Its disk takes up one quarter of the sky. It releases great bursts of fire perpendicular to the ground. Then it steadies and rises a little and condenses into a thick, slightly ovoid, mass.

37.

The glaciers are liquified. The sun solidifies. The vapors thin out, rise halfway up. It is hot. A river of mud sweeps along huge peat bogs which agglomerate, fuse, and little by little form a continent. A sudden grass springs up to insane heights, wilts immediately and revives. The flora of the coal mines grows, enlarges, spongy, monocellular, fleshy and transparent.

38.

We see the vascular plants harnessing the energy of the three elements, transforming it, manufacturing complex substances which become nourishment.

39.

It rains. It rains. The water rises. The needles of the conifers ramify, their tips flatten, they open out into umbels. Fungi grow on all the branches, floating with the current. Algae, yeasts, black sponges. Debris of all kinds accumulates at the bottom of the lakes. Plesiosauria in decomposition.

40.

The sun has dissolved. Something like a grainy and phosphorescent fog on a decomposed sea where a few obscene, giant, tumid larvae move heavily.

41.

An obscure eye closes on all that has been.

42.

A finger extends, lengthens, touches, probes, retracts, disappears inside a conch. Tufts of grassy limbs awaken, turn like sunflowers. A stomach travels to the end of a thread and vibrates. Suctions, spasms, air-holes. Everything is blind under the water and the light is one-eyed.

43.

The joint petrifies. The sated stomach becomes coral. Oxidizes. The pores emit a vitreous sweat. Movement, rarified, freezes into a hinge. Life takes root and descends like a sounding line, anchors itself. In the deep, it is absolute night and only the stones are animated.

44.

We see the crystallizations forming, stars with six branches, and each branch knots, crosses, in an X, a tau, a potent cross, a crosslet, a papal cross. This has no proportion on the screen. An infinitely small becomes infinitely big. The central fire projects the molecular shadow.

45.

Polyhedrons evolve strategically. Colored gases precipitate. The complete minerals amalgamate, and we see the chemically pure elements gushing out of the slag heap of matter.

46.

Everything is black.

We see a veined network of dark red fire sketch the family tree of the earth. It is dense like a nervous system.

47.

A circulation is established, a boiling, a radiance. Sections of shadow are detached. Spindles of fire isolate themselves. Cones, cylinders, pyramids. Everything collapses into the central hearth. Explosion. And the burning sea rushes, torrential foam.

48.

A ball.

The cracked, slashed, desiccated surface is scratched by the fingernail of a cold light. Peeling off from it, like skin, are layers of chalk, plaster, gypsum, then a layer of flint which strikes off sparks at the shock. Each geological epoch reappears. Craters are hollowed out. Pumice stone is lodged at the bottom of a cirque. Perpendicular slate. Rock. Granite. Borax. Hollow salt.

49.

Everything spurts out. Everything merges. Tohu. Bohu. The oily sea, heavy like asphalt. The blackened, bloody earth liquifies. The waters become mountains and the continents rot.

Whirlwind.

50.

Fin of a shark, the last ray of light slashes across chaotic space. . .

[1918]

## Note

*The End of the World Filmed by the Angel of Notre Dame* is a remake of the Book of Revelation starring Charlie Chaplin. God the Father sits behind a desk puffing on a cigar and worrying about the bottom line. He decides to expand his market by converting the Martians, but they are appalled at his vulgarity. While he is recovering from this humiliation, a faithful advisor suggests that he fulfill the prophecies. At God's command, the Angel of Notre Dame de Paris lifts his trumpet to his lips and blows: all the cities of the world come crashing down in the square in front of the cathedral and the world begins to end. Just when it looks as if the last ray of light has finally gone out, though, the film breaks and we see everything at high speed in reverse until God is sitting at his desk smoking his cigar again. The last word is "Bankruptcy." Cendrars claimed that he wrote the seven chapters of *The End of the World* in one night, the night of his 29th birthday in 1916, "the most beautiful night of writing in my life." He called it a screenplay in the same way Flaubert ("the first film director," according to Cendrars) might have called *The Temptation of St. Anthony* a screenplay if the cinema had existed when he wrote it. *The End of the World* was published as a novel in 1919, with illustrations by Fernand Leger.

*The ABCs of Cinema* dates from around the same time, though it wasn't published in its final form until 1926. Both texts emerge from the most intense period of Cendrars' infatuation with the cinema. In 1921 he assisted Abel Gance on a film called *La Roue* (Gance later echoed several passages from *The ABCs* almost verbatim in an article published in *L'Art Cinematographique* in 1927), and in 1923 he made a film of his own, *The Black Venus*, at Renascimento-film in Rome. It was so unsuccessful that Cendrars later said he had had it destroyed. In any case, all that remains to us of his brief foray into cinema is *The Feverish Pearl*, which he published shortly thereafter, and which was probably the screenplay for his cinematic disaster. Though Cendrars hailed the cinema as a new language of images which would render the language of words obsolete, in his work the cinema was always at the service of the written word, no more than a source for some new techniques and some new metaphors. After the debacle in Rome, the closest Cendrars came to making another film was a series of radio plays called *Films without Images*. His most powerful rejection of the cinematic image appears in an account of a two-week trip to Hollywood in 1936: "Writing is neither a lie nor a dream, but reality, and perhaps all we can ever know of the real." A, B and C pure and simple, not the ABCs of cinema.

Both of these works and others from the same period will be published in *Modernities and other texts by Blaise Cendrars*, forthcoming from the University of Nebraska Press in spring, 1992.

# LETTER FROM BARBARA MOR

May 17, 1990

Dear Clayton,

*Sulfur* 26 arrived. You produce so much in print, and do so much else; I don't know how. These are handsome magazines, thick with brain-food. I don't know if you are now in Europe, or returned. Your postcard with Rivera and Kahlo has information on your itinerary I think, but to get at it I'd have to remove it from the wall over my desk. I'd rather not; so much for knowing what's happening in the world.

Yes, I live in a desert reptile state, which is as Castaneda describes the southwest state (of mind): hypnosis. Hip gnosis. Slow and heavy-moving, while the scenery is neon. Image a Gila monster with a cheroot, or the zoot-pachuco as nagual. But, as a Mexican writer (Reyes) noted, Mexican men escalate to death faster than any on earth. I was born and raised within the decor of this mood, but life with Pancho has of course intensified it. Life on Tucson streets with an Aztec-Mayan streetfighter will of course Intensify It. It is a matter of enormously condensed and suspended energy, can blow up Universe with any microflick of the tail. But: is wholly unliterary, unhistoric. These exist still packed in DNA; as Pancho says, "I am the Book." No-word dream-state of images, magnetic fields, and body action. It needs a good translator. The energy of verbal work, writing, is a high-speed or short-wave radiation. My brain works, but it is long waves, below the sound-threshold. I mean I don't hear much going on in there: the metallic drone of the Malabar caves, one-way traffic on Lead St.

I try to write, and some filings gather around the magnet, but not much. At least it's warm here now (another winter with no heat or hot water). Pancho has returned to Tucson several times to get work, money. Employment is zilch in Albuquerque, and wages low. He's done some shitwork yardwork, $20 a day, couple days a week, for our food. In Tucson he can make a couple hundred doing a weekend yard renovation; he has

other money sources which I'd rather he didn't return to. Twenty years in and out of prison or jail, a record that takes up 3 microfilms; no car no phone no residence no job history can't be bonded can't read or write can't vote. If I can't get a job, how can he? Hard for a person to go straight in America, even when they want to. Someone should tell the world how impossible it is to deal with all the agencies that are funded to "help": because they are staffed by fools and servo-mechanisms, people without any experience in the problems. Those of us without cars, phones, answering services, hot water, washers-and-driers etc. can't deal with them, not because we are misfits but because they are so dependent on their wires, us wireless people can't fill out their forms. All you want to do is take out your wire-cutters and shred them (their forms, their faces).

Anyway, it's scary when he returns to Tucson, legal and illegal forces wait there, with nets, to trap him. Return him to the past. Sometimes he says he was happier and better off drunk and junked-up on the streets. He was a master hustler; in control of the cartoon, at least. If you're not an artist in America (i.e. turned on by the material) life is very dumb, insulting. A poet or a street hustler; not much else worth being.

Monica Sjoo is here from England, on the west coast, Pt. Reyes for 2 weeks, then she does a slide-show in Phoenix and then will be here May 21–25. We'll do the public access Ch. 27 show with Edite and Tom Cates, and something at John Randall's Salt of the Earth. One of those nights is the final episode of *Twin Peaks*, so I will have to read my poetry and split before 9 pm. I watch it in black and white, beautiful Nazi shots which I intuit are more appropriate to the theme than color. All the tubes in America could start simultaneously leaking blood, or transmitting autopsy-room live-action around the clock, it would not be stranger than David Lynch on network: meta-media which luminizes its own commercials. Anyway, Monica will be here. Sonia Johnson spends retreat time here in Albuquerque, I just found out; also Jane Caputi. Laurie Anderson has reportedly bought land here too, up near Lama Foundation, north of Taos. I think we should unite, get funding, take over a church—I prefer one of those old Catholic buildings with cloisters, or a morada with whip-blood on the beams—begin our own Cathedral of Crones. Church of Christ's Aunty. . ? Nunnery of Ramses' Mummy. The Ancient Order of the Electric Whore of Babylon . . ?

Whatever. As the Goddess surfaces in the nice hands of liberals, New Age therapy gourmets, assorted Earnest Seekers of White Light, and too many women my age wearing moons in their ears but with no prolonged experience of the Night. . . .her real dark powers drop away. Leak back into

the Underground, I guess. The new taboos and terrors of the current "spirituality" people seem to be: anger, argumentativeness, and unkempt appearance. All of which are abundantly mine. So when asked to write about aspects of the Goddess (e.g. for *Woman of Power* #15, Winter 1989), I have to do the Irish Morrigan, in homage to us few toothless, pissed, squinty, messy, critically brilliant Hags left over from the 60s, with some political brainwaves still intact. In that decade, the fusion of spirit and politics was a given; we were passionate, intact, i.e. radical. Then time does its work. By the 80s "the Goddess" meant a spiritual alternative to, escape from, rejection of: worldly politics. Some of the major "voices" of the Goddess movement were ex-Christian women still seeking otherworldly solace for personal life-wounds; in their hands, "the Mind" was defined as masculine, once again, and "the Goddess" constructed as a kind of holy matriarchal Massage Parlor, with nothing above the neck but an unconditional smile. In this therapeutic mode, rawly radical critiquing of the problems of American women (e.g. Bible-based law, attitudes and politics) became impossible; it "hurt people's feelings." Women wanted to "eat their cake and have it too"; this is profound!; they wanted to eat the Pagan Goddess (sacramentally and sexually Eat Her), but they wanted to do this Strange Thing with familiar mouths, i.e. with Christian mouths, Catholic and Protestant mouths, Jewish mouths, Buddhist mouths, Marxist Maoist mouths, liberal secular mouths. . . . .once again, the Goddess is used as Eclectic Bread.*

In a *San Francisco Bay Guardian* review of *The Great Cosmic Mother* (Vol. 22, #2, October 21, 1987), Craig McLaughlin trashed the book for being "just too damn serious." Relative to the historical "light touch" of Starhawk's books (which he was also reviewing), happy books which make men like him jes feel like dancin'—GCM is a howling bitch. History, smistory: politics, diuretics: this Goddess stuff is allowed to exist *only* because it promises to Make Us Feel Good: that's what Mommies are for. New Age spiritual eclecticism comes from the same self-saving/self-serving (i.e. commercially-oriented) fear of critical confrontation; they want to sell therapies, tapes and amulets, NOT make a Bloody Scene. Of course, that is what the REAL Goddess is all about: A Bloody Scene. What has been oppressed, repressed, distressed, unexpressed and unredressed for 3,000 years. But of course it doesn't sell crystal retreat jujubes, cassettes on how to get rich in real estate thru spirit channeling, instant satori success via liposuction; or otherwise dematerialize the silly bourgeois auras of all the people who can afford this crapola. It's too damn serious, uh-huh. So even the Morrigan piece is relatively chickenshit; the Goddess magazines are

* (Pan Pan. . !)

very beautiful and relatively serene; going back 15 years, with *WomanSpirit,* they always edited out "bullshit" and other basic Old English speech from my writing, even when quite intentionally placed, and apropos. "Goddess" editors have continued the old Christian/Latin euphemism trip, by and large, confusing "the language of women's spirituality" with make-nice middle-class white avoidance-murmuring. So the raw power of speech and blood, as I said, drips back into the Undersoil/soul. While "the Goddess" becomes a Hallmark card. Well, this is how Power recycles itself. The Morrigan piece was reprinted in the Premier Issue of the New *MS.*, July-August 1990. The poverty of the feminist-spiritual-political situation in America must be indicated by this; Robin Morgan and the other editors want a tough, global, no-ad-controlled magazine, with a continuing feature called "Inner Space": am I the *only* Bag Lady in the Goddess camp, the only one alliterating foamatically about "righteous rage," or imaging the Return of the Feminist-Fists-in-the-Face (d'ya recall that fine auld Irish-Injun warrior woman), or otherwise suggesting the necessity of reconnecting our spirits with our butts. . ? I don't know. Robin had to cut it down some, so in the *MS.* reprint it doesn't have anything about my personal melanoma (tho it is illustrated appropriately with a Hag with a Death-Crow on her shoulder); and it begins with "In this post-everything-real decade. . . ."

My problem with "post-modern writing" is just the proliferation of the word "post," by the way. Post-this, post-that, sort of a funny attitudinal *post*uring. Everything follows something, after all: we live in unfolding time. So is a flower not a flower but a "post-bud"? A dirty shirt is "post-washed"? Well, I know it's more complex than that. But some kind of intellectual cooptation of other people's creatively-decorated toilet paper that is amusing, or sad: the Epignonai, the Late-Born. Post-avant-garde, meaning: all art up til now just sells junk on the tube and you can't outrun it, so join it: Believe Nothing. That's cool. A P.O.V. on KNME-PBS 2 weeks ago showed Leon Golub at work; and in Dublin, where they asked him how he could keep his paintings from being bought by the rich. He can't, of course. So the real POST is *Twin Peaks*; you can't outrun them, just turn around and hold up the slow mirror: Nazi Soap Opera. Post-Toasties is eating corpses to obtain meta-fiber. We're all dead anyway, just Do It Well. This is my mood now. The esthetics of post-life. America IS the 4th Reich.

Interesting in this context is your poem "Guyton Place" in *Sulfur* 25. I've been reading Jean Baudrillard, this is my philosopher; and I can feel your mind and heart swirling with the same, the vertigo of "dummy things," "dummy life." For a video project I'm doing with Edite and Tom Cates, who do public access here, I'm retrieving parts of a long poem I wrote in 1980, "about" the same sensation, the oily hemorrhage of all things, vortex of

detached objects, mechanically self-reproducing images with bits of flesh attached sucking us all down the black hole, that is "hyperreality" in Baudrillard's description. The old tyrants, Castaneda's *pinches tiranos,* so loud squawking visible and heavy-fisted, they are leaving us: Soviet system, Democrats and Republicans, Cold War demonics: whatever braking function they exerted on this disappearance of everything into the simulation of everything—it's gone. The Russians want BREAD. Pan-Pan. To welcome them into the Free Commercial Market, *Family Circle* could ship them truckloads of magazines full of beautiful pictures of Bread. These are still naive people, they don't yet know entirely how to Eat Images; but they will learn. The Soviet system, like the feudal/fascistic Catholic Church in Spain and Ireland, preserved a kind of consumer innocence: from land pollution, from mass advertising, gross manipulations of flesh by images. No mas. If we thought the chronic tyrannical repression of desire's enactment was awful, what happens when the globe is controlled by this promise to fulfill every dream NOW? Two sides of one coin: patriarchal biophobia. The side with the Pope or the Boot on it conserved some natural resources, indigenous human. . .wistfulness? Innocence? I don't know; the side with Xuxi on it—I don't know how to spell her name, ShuShi, Brazilian porno queen who now has a kiddie show and will in 1996 be Dan Quayle's running mate for tubal legislation of the world—well, that's the other side. The Goddess for Fun and Profit. Baudrillard is (therefore) cool. So is "Guyton Place." The brakes are gone.

Finally, thank you for the *Sulfur* 25 essay on *Shoah,* Michel Deguy. It provokes my pagan politics; i.e., my problem with the "singularity" of the Jewish Holocaust is that this kind of mass torture and attempted extermination of groups of human beings is not singular. It is an historic method of control within any patriarchal system. The numbers change, the quantity of exterminated people might increase or decrease (as G. Bernard Shaw said, people can only suffer and die one consciousness at a time); from the first rock smashing a head, thru the Bronze Age raids and organized massacres in the name(s) of Macho God, thru the history of European wars, persecutions, pogroms, thru WW1 & 2 bombings, gassings, village exterminations, thru Dresden and Hiroshima, to My Lai, to Beirut, to. . . .what comes next; and Jonestown, and Green River killings, and. . .it's the same thing *qualitatively:* the power of men to control and destroy life against its will. Anal-sadistic necrophilia; not to be homophobic, but patriarchal man deifies the Death-Hole (anus) over the Birth-Hole (vulva) as his own Power Machine; religious philosophies, political systems, behaviors and history follow accordingly. The sheer quantities of those destroyed, as in the Holocaust, horrifies observers; as a personal nightmare increased exponentially to a political fact. But it IS, experientially, every victim's personal

horror; and we are all potential victims of it; and it's hard to name any human group that has not been, historically, a victim of it, or the threat of it. It is Fear, after all, of The Man. All "history" is an exponentially growing picture, a living blow-up, of the same thing. They tell us to fear The Terrible Mother, but it is in fact The Terrible Father who has been scaring the continuous shit out of everybody. Que no? And the Jews of Europe worshipped the same God; only when Yahweh was Holocausting Canaanites, that was "past," that was "other."

Compulsively seeing, analyzing, interpreting, dealing with such events as "singularities"—"events so horrible they surpass description," "acts of a monster" etc etc—really misses the point. And intentionally. Because they aren't. Between the freaky serial killer who tortures, rapes, kills and chops up women in his basement for stored Burger Buns, and the atrocities of the 3rd Reich, I see no difference, except numbers. The world view, I mean, is the same; the ambience of the crime. The only difference is in our proportionate horror that it can happen, "right in our midst," "down the block, just next door": 1) without us knowing, we say, and/or 2) without us being able to control or stop it. So it is the horror of life. Everyone's personal nightmare, under patriarchy: where God is the original torturer, rapist, massacrist. And rationale. As Reich said, we are all wired for it; otherwise, it wouldn't happen. Our "modern" difference might be media: since WW2 everything occurs sooner or later on-screen, multiplied by machinery. The Nazi machinery, etc. But during the Inquisition, let's say, the dungeons were next door truly, in the basement of the church; you could hear the screams, watch them burn in the plaza, i.e. everyday, common life. Local and immediate; or global, via media. The pain, the fear, are the same. Let's say there are malignant cells in Europe in 1486, more in America in our time, or in Cambodia or in El Salvador, Argentina, Mozambique; accused witches, political prisoners, the victims of serial killers, gang raids, war; what's the diff??? From the first malignant cell to the terminal tumor, it's all the same. It's cancer. It will kill you. And you don't deal with it by treating every case of cancer as a singularity, an historic anomaly, right? Because then you forfeit the powerful diagnostic tool, which is amassment of historic data, patterns, microcosms and macrocosms of symptom, metaphor of inevitable realization of every possibility once it enters the multiplying process of living organisms. Or ruling machineries.

Didn't intend to say all this because it sounds like an argument and I don't have an argument—with a great document like *Shoah,* I mean—except to say that the Holocaust was no peculiar or singular event; it is described that way by habit, perhaps, because Jews see themselves, and Gentiles repeat the definition, as "peculiar," separated off from the history of other groups

by "God." But I don't believe this definition; so I don't see the attempted extermination of Jews in WW2 as singular, but as one more blow-up of the same, original event. Not defined by the singularity of the victim group, but by the commonality of the torturer's urge. Women undergo rape, humiliation, abuse, threat, terror, confinement and slaughter on a daily, massively historic scale. There's just so much of it, so pervasive, women's "holocaust" can't be surrounded with a border and focussed as this historic event. But: the attempted extermination of European witches. Or American indigenous peoples. Or the Irish by the Brits. Or the Masai of Mozambique. . . well, my machine is stuck on the redundance button. You know all this, and could say it better. Gentiles get off on elegiac meditations on the suffering of the Jews, which might be an attempt to avoid responsibility, as breast-beating is a ritual gesture which diverts energy that would otherwise solve the problem, or preclude its occurrence. But it's also a way of blinding ourselves to the massive size of the screen. You know what I'm saying, I'm a radical feminist. It isn't Jews and Nazis; it is global, biologic, and related to the male problem which is your beautiful turf: the unfinished or reluctant emergence from beasthood into human consciousness. But specifically OUR DEFINITIONS, LOOKING BACK, OF THE NATURE OF THAT BEASTHOOD. All Holocausts, all wars, all sadistic basement lonely torturements, all all of it is just one solitary little boy bending over trying to look up his own butt, scared of the stinky darkness he finds there, and freaking out to exorcise the forces (god, demons, nature, parents, human systems) which either are or are not responsible for it. Whatever explanation, it's dark, stinky and scary. And it can't be me/mine, that's unbearable. So it's you/yours. And I hate it.

Little boys tear wings off beautiful things. Maleness defined as the power to control/destroy living beauty. And girls turned on by this, feeling it is toughly magnetic and attractive. And it is! This little monster is seductive. Needs a good mommy; who may or may not provide ritual victims for his exotic urges, etc. Hitler's major support groups: young males, adult women.

It is our beast, the human beast. But the other beasts aren't like this. So it is the product of singular human consciousness, that of the interpreter of objects, how we define and interpret, and use the fact of beastness, of being material, of being once bestial. Of exorcising the beast by defining it as Other. The institutionalization of necrophilic definitions of the Other: all patriarchal religions.

Mass slaughter of innocents occurs in the Bible, where it is commanded by Yahweh, and justified spiritually. (And the Koran; the Bhagavad-Gita; the

Vedas.) Regarding some relation to *Shoah,* I've asked only two Jewish people to tell me what they think of Biblical massacres, in the context of WW2. Both said exactly the same thing: "That was different." The Bible is different; Hebrew theology/ontology is different.

No, it isn't. It wasn't. It's all the same: the human mind's ability to justify the pain and terror and elimination of others, while creating entire cultures of righteousness to avenge and preclude (and ceremonialize as "singular") one's own pain and terror and attempted elimination.

This means I really do believe what I wrote in GCM: it's not Nazis and Jews, Christians and Arabs, orthodox and heathens, black and white: under all of it, it is Male and Female. There are two sexes alone with each other on this difficult planet in a vast and unspeaking universe; we are different; the evidence that the difference drives us crazy is called human history. Every victim of every "holocaust" is just a scapegoat for this original crime of sexual difference. Which must breed a terrific fear in males; a corresponding cowardice, compromise, accommodation in females. There is more real, deep structural and chemical, *biologic* difference between a white male and a white female, than there is between a white male and a black male, or a black male and a Chinese male, etc. Racism is diversion. The "other" who males basically hate and fear, and want to destroy, is a female Otherness. If European fascist males didn't have Jews to lock up, gas, exterminate, they would have done it to "witches" again, or "heretics," or Communists, or poets—anyone defined as "female" vis-a-vis the macho ideal, the "inferior" body. Gentile writers on WW2 eulogize the victims, sort of to avoid the horrific work of analyzing the Nazis, who weren't singular either. And are still among us. They did have beautiful uniforms, which perhaps indicates they were becoming CONSCIOUS of the real issue? Males and their plumage display—*Heil, Peacock.*

Well, this is Post-Loony Tunes. I read *Sulfur,* not too much at once, because it annihilates me to read words of people who seem to have their voices. After 3 years of the street, non-verbalness, terror and confusion and many other things, I can't get a voice back. Reading is painful; writing is awful; but recuperative, instructive, or necessary, even tho it hurts. I will always treasure your envelope sent from Cro-Magnon Hotel. . . ! I once had relatives there. . . .long ago.

# CAMILLE PAGLIA
# MILTON KESSLER

Once in a lifetime, if you're lucky, you have a great teacher. Mine was Milton Kessler.

My book, *Sexual Personae,* was born in my experiences as a college student during the turbulent, florid Sixties at Harpur College (the State University of New York at Binghamton). Harpur, with its strong presence of avant-garde, intellectual Jewish students from New York City, was seething with raw creative energy. People called it Berkeley East.

During the Sixties, poetry and rock music were in sync. Long-haired, barefoot young men with guitars sat under trees reading poetry books. Allen Ginsberg's bardic chants routed Whitman's nature litanies, Hart Crane's urban surrealism, and African-American jazz rhythms into Bob Dylan, whose harsh lyrics made rock an art form. Jim Morrison of the Doors was an omnivorous reader with a photographic memory. Poetry has gone out of fashion in today's rock world, and the music has suffered. Rock has lost its spirituality and sense of mission.

Poetry flourished at Harpur College. Books of Lorca, Rimbaud, and Baudelaire were strewn among the latest Jimi Hendrix and Jefferson Airplane albums. Poetry readings were jammed. We saw dozens of important American poets in their prime—Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Galway Kinnell, and many others.

Milton Kessler is everywhere in my memories of that time. He was at the readings and raucous receptions afterward at remote faculty houses. He was at the art exhibits, the performances of the Guarneri Quartet (then in residence), the endless foreign films, those spectacular, sophisticated hallucinations which so formed my imagination.

Kessler embodies for me an ideal of the arts in dynamic synthesis. I despise specialization, separation, narrowness, tracking. I despise academe as it is presently constituted. Kessler is not so much a professor as a visionary rabbi—something that can also be said of my graduate-school mentor, Harold Bloom. Great teachers live their subject. The subject teaches itself through them. It uses them and, in return, charges them with elemental energy.

Purely by chance, I took "Introduction to Poetry" with Miton Kessler. I have never been the same. Kessler's classes on Theodore Roethke's *Words for the Wind* showed me what poetry is and how it works on the body. As I flip through that book, I see countless images and phrases that ended up, transformed by my dream life, in *Sexual Personae*. There are the eerie spirit-presences of nature, the oozy mire, mute beasts, and mystical Muse-women.

Kessler teaches Roethke or Whitman's hypnotic "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" stressed the body-rhythms and organic pulses that underlie poetry. Words are merely a veil through which we glimpse other, deeper realities. It was primarily because of my training by Kessler that I was later able to recognize Saussurean language-theory for the fraud that it is. A whole generation of academics my age destroyed themselves chasing after Saussure and his Parisian disciples. Right now, at mid-career, they are waking up to the nullity of their work.

Reading poetry aloud, Kessler made great use of dynamics, another of the losses rock music has suffered since the Sixties. Like the blues shouters, Kessler could roar, then drop off to a rasp or whisper. Poetry was music-drama. I recently learned that Kessler studied voice and opera as a young man and had even been a spear carrier at the old Met. This explains much of his impact on me. Italians invented opera. It is our way of living in and reacting to the world. In opera, emotion fills the body. Italians experience emotion in sensory terms, as if it were something eaten, drunk, or poured over the flesh. Dick Cavett, on TV, once said he didn't like opera; he didn't "get it." As I looked at his rigid, little WASPy body and large, parched, smirky, Ivy League head, I said: yes.

Kessler made me the teacher I am. He believed in the dramatic moment. Everything that you were, everything that you had ever seen or experienced pressed upon the text in front of you. The class hour seemed to melt and expand. Memory is central to both the Jewish and Italian traditions. Reading a poem, Kessler strove to remember everything, to fill it even fuller than the poet had left it. With the improvisation of great Jewish comedians like Lenny Bruce, Kessler would weave in and out of the class his own passing thoughts, reminiscences, disasters. His classic formulation: "I think of. . ." It echoes in my mind. I use it in my book. Listening to Kessler, you were understanding how the poetic mind works, how sensations and images flow, twist, and bond.

I remember bursting out with startled laughter when Kessler once said offhandedly in the middle of class, "So last week I was driving along and, in my usual trance, ran into the back of a truck." Master teachers, revealing themselves, show the continuum of life and thought. The physical and psychological realms coexist in a fifth dimension. Kessler interested me in the shocking segue, the disconcerting juxtaposition, an existential collage.

Eight years ago, while I was a teaching as a visitor at Yale (and dodging the preppy gases), a puzzled senior said to me, "Your teaching style is so unusual." Of course, it was Kessler's style. I think of a *New Yorker* cartoon from the 1930s: the dark, stocky figure of Fiorello LaGuardia is shown entering towered City Hall, which, in subsequent frames, swells, puffs, wheezes, steams, explodes, then wearily sighs and subsides as the mayor leaves it at the end of the day. That's what Kessler's classes were like. Architecture seemed to dissolve and remold.

French poststructuralism, among its many stupidities, denies that a coherent self exists. Academic nebbishes love this notion. Anyone interested in the performing arts knows that personality is a vitalistic, uncontrollable phenomenon. Talented performers and teachers have an electric power of personality, a charismatic magnitude and density. Kessler is a burly, robust man with the inner emotionality of the melancholy Jewish tradition. He told of once, among strangers, marching heavily up to a table and a woman calling out, "Taurus!" Italians have always been grounded in practical material reality, from the sewers and aqueducts of Roman engineering to our control of today's concrete and stonecutting trades. Kessler's Taurine physicality and materialism appealed to me. His new book reveals that he once worked in the garment industry. I hate the airy, affected, rich-bitch dilettantism of the art world. The artist has more in common with the car mechanic, all sweat, grease, and ingenuity. Kessler was blunt, profane about pretension. Once the professors took the English majors to a poetry conference at another college, where a girl speaker welcomed us: "We the special ones, the sensitive ones. . ." Kessler said, "If she'd done that at Harpur, the students would have dragged up cow manure and hurled it at her!" He made comic gestures of manure-heaving.

In class, Kessler gave me my first warning about the deplorable condition of academic criticism. Second-generation New Criticism was then in decline. Kessler described the spirit-killing academic approach, which tried to "crack" the poem, smashing it like a nut. Worse things were to come, in the French fad of the Seventies, which exalted mundane, jargon-spouting critics over the artist. Kessler found graduate education in general hostile to thought. He told of an incident where a graduate student, mercilessly goaded by Roy Harvey Pearce, pulled a knife on him in class. This story impressed me. I dislike the bland, WASPy business-as-usual style encouraged by American graduate schools. It's Kraft cheese slices on the grand scale. Emotion is suppressed and contorted. A criticism alienated from emotion is false, doomed.

Kessler freely showed emotion. Once in class, he suddenly exploded with rage at some boys in the back row. He accused them of "peeking," of peeping Tomism: "Get out! It's *obscene!*" He meant, I assume, that they were sneering cynics, keeping themselves apart from the class. It's good

for students to see honest emotion from their teachers. Around this time, I visited the classes of a friend at another university. Midway through a history lecture, the professor's briefcase slipped off the desk and fell with a huge clang into the wastebasket. No one in the jammed hall breathed. The professor blanched, but stone-faced, kept talking and at last, with difficulty, rescued the briefcase. Strange and dead. At Harpur, there would have been hilarity and Jewish schtick, the free play of humor and self-satire. I welcome all random incidents—from chairs tipping over to explosions in the street—and try to incorporate them into the class flow.

Returning from a trip to Europe, Kessler commented to us about the poor quality of American food, then in its Wonderbread and TV-dinner phase. He said, "If you ever asked for *an orange* in an American restaurant, the walls would fall and the staff go mad!" From Europe he excitedly brought us a personal discovery, Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*. He said the moment he saw it he knew "this is *the* book" he'd always been looking for. I too now loved Bachelard, whose dignified yet fluid phenomenological descriptive method seemed to me ideal for art. I had been reading Bergson and Poulet. Bachelard was the last modern French writer I took seriously. Post-Sartrean French literature got more and more deranged, sudsy conceit-tempests in a Parisian teapot.

I remember Kessler in warm relation to the Harpur hippies and radicals, who were mainly from urban and suburban New York City. One picture is especially vivid: a crowded, drunken reception for a visiting writer at the Kesslers' Binghamton house. It was a time when rebellious young men, letting their hair grow, had a soft, open look of poetic innocence. You can see it in news films of Sixties demonstrations and rock festivals. Afterward, in the Seventies, American faces got hard, snide. Too much had happened. Sprawled in the middle of the Kesslers' jammed living-room floor was a ring of hippies singing amid the din. The leader, sitting cross-legged, was laughing, exuberant. His bearded, beautiful face, lit by a ruddy lamp, was framed by a wild crown of glossy, jet-black hair. It was at such moments that one recognized the pure Romanticism of the Sixties. Kessler was deeply moved. Arms folded, he stood watching the animated boy and then, his eyes moist, remarked to another professor, "He is a young David." Overhearing this unobserved, I was overwhelmed by a sense of Jewish history, of cultural transmission from fathers to sons over time.

Another of my memories is less pleasant. As I attended or audited course after course of Kessler's, I came into conflict with another of the radicals, a brilliant, smouldering New Yorker with dark, lank hair, rough skin, and piercing blue eyes. He had an implacable Scorpio intensity. Studying was not fashionable in the psychedelic Sixties. This fellow, Jeffrey, found my busy in-class note-taking totally unhip and reactionary. Notations,

at every hour of the day and night, are in fact the basis of my writing. At home, at work, in stores, in cars, I constantly record my fleeting impressions and mental flashes, which zip by like meteor showers turning quickly to ash. Jeff cut a glamorous figure on campus. Once while I was sitting in the cavernous snack bar, he and his coterie, with enormous éclat, came sweeping in, half-clothed, dripping from an impromptu dip in the plaza fountain. It was a radical gesture for a generation emerging from the repressive Fifties convention. When I decided to go to Yale for graduate school, Jeff confronted and denounced me: Yale was not "where it's happening." I should go to Buffalo, then a hotbed of poetry and psychoanalytic criticism, my special interest. He upset me, and I sought advice from several teachers. In a way, he was prophetic: two years later, I was sitting in the office of the Director of Graduate Studies at the Yale English Department, formally protesting the way "Freudian" and "psychoanalytic" were contemptuously used as dirty words by professors in class. That same year, when Leslie Fiedler came to speak at Yale, not a single English Department faculty member showed up.

Kessler was, I think, quite unaware of the bolts of hostility passing between Jeff and me in class, particularly when we were meeting in the round in living rooms or on the grass outside. Once, as we were discussing a poem, I suggested there was (what else is new?) an element of "onanism" in an image. Kessler, head bowed and gravely scrutinizing the text, said the very idea was "horrifying," "repellent"—here Jeff looked up and glared at me in malicious triumph—but "there's no question it's absolutely there"—now *I* glared back in triumph as Jeff wilted. The whole thing was absurd, but I cannot separate it from my memories of Kessler's classes. I tell the story because of its extraordinary conclusion. I never saw or heard from Jeff again after graduation. Seven years later, while I was teaching at Bennington, I picked up the local newspaper and saw, in the headlines, that three miles over the state border from my Vermont house there had been a mysterious murder-suicide. A New York man of Jeff's name had arrived with his girlfriend for a vacation weekend and had killed her and then himself with a rifle. I called Harpur. The Washington Square area street address was the same. I wrote immediately to Kessler, who was devastated. He wrote back that, getting the news, he nearly "fell on the floor." It was one of the most haunting things that ever happened to me. I do believe in karma. This was a Sixties tragedy, a story of promising but unfulfilled talent, which in many cases was short-circuited by drugs. Drugs first liberated and then destroyed. I never learned anything more than what I have said here. It is an odd destiny that it has left to me, Jeff's unwilling enemy, to remember him.

At my commencement ceremony, it was announced from the podium that I was the first known second-generation Harpur student. (My father

had entered when it was Triple Cities College and had been in the first Harpur graduating class.) It was also announced that I, as the valedictorian, had received "only one B" in my four years of college. Meeting my parents afterward at the reception, Kessler said, laughing and making rueful bearlike, motions with his arms, "When I heard that, I quaked in my seat!" His grade was the B, which I wore proudly, then and now. It remains a symbol to me of Kessler's original imagination, his higher standard. What Kessler gave me is beyond the conventions of academe. I saw so clearly in graduate school and afterward that my early exposure to Kessler had miraculously spared me the stultifying formulas of thought and decorum that afflicted most of those who had gone to older, more established schools. With Kessler, you begin literature and art fresh each time you come to them.

In reply to a recent inquiry about artistic influences on his work, Kessler listed Verdi, Puccini, Jussi Bjorling, and Giovanni Martinelli in opera; Antonioni, Bergman, and DeSica in cinema; Post-Impressionism and German Expressionism in painting; Chekhov, Gogol, Babel, Sholem Aleichem, Camus, and Sartre in fiction. He reveres the Torah and classic Chinese poetry and names these as poets with whom he feels a special kinship: Blake, Whitman, Thomas Hardy, Dylan Thomas, William Carlos Williams, John Crowe Ransom, Roethke, Elizabeth Bishop, A.R. Ammons, John Logan, David Ignatow, Donald Hall, George Oppen, Charles Reznikoff, Karl Rakosi, Jackson Mac Low, Clayton Eshleman, Jerome Rothenberg.

Kessler says of this fifth book, *The Grand Concourse,** that several of the poems were "written in hospitals." He speaks of "the Ars Medica" of his work, of "illness determining body-states." I remember him speaking in class of the psychological "meaning" of asthma, of its power in a specific family romance. It was the first time I had thought in this way, and I never forgot it. I continue to interpret disease and anxiety in psychodramatic terms and to see the art work as an emanation or displaced and projected body of the artist. The cover photo of Kessler's new book is a striking aerial view of an enormous strip of aging brick apartment buildings along the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, where he grew up. The name of this broad, sweeping avenue makes me ponder the immigrant experience. My family, coming from Italy, bypassed the city and settled in upstate New York, where the Endicott-Johnson shoe factories needed the ancient leather working skills of our region in Lazio. Most European immigrants of the last century arrived here poor. But behind us stretches the grand concourse of the Western tradition. Teaching is another kind of grand concourse. Through it, you produce and set into motion spiritual progeny, those who Plato says are under the protection of the higher or Uranian Aphrodite.

* Mss., SUNY-Binghamton, 1990.

Kessler's poems are filled with visual images. Interestingly, he once worked as an optician. This is another parallel between his sensibility and mine. My earliest memories are of staring, transfixed, at objects, clouds, colors, light. As a writer, I strive to save the gorgeous world of appearances. I have always been conscious (here comes my scorn for Saussure and Lacan) of the prodigious labor of transferring or translating sensory impressions, the flux of life, into language. Inscribing his new book to me, Kessler paid me the great compliment of calling *Sexual Personae* an "optical masterpiece." Kessler's poetry seizes my attention by its fidelity to both visual and emotional truth, a rare combination. Kessler negotiates between the outer and inner worlds; he records the day-to-day moments of truce won by our ever-shifting consciousness. Even when he alludes to "Nietzsche, Wagner, Furtwängler" ("Everyone Loves Children"), there is nothing academic about it. His style is stripped down, abrupt, emphatic, concrete. The rhythms are spoken, flexible. All the poems in *The Grand Concourse* have a different "look." The lines, the shapes vary, like our own moods.

One of my favorite poems here is "The Machine of Sundown": an "orange-rot Liberty hull freighter," "welded with gull-dung and war slime," has, like "the vanished gas tanks at Coney Island, / fallen to blue-torch scrap-truck" and "slides on slabs of orange river slag." These explosive, aggressive rhythms reproduce the impact and surprise of visual signals hitting the optic nerve. They carry with them the bruising workdays of steelworkers and longshoremen. The gritty, decaying riverscape-details write history around us, an unsentimental elegy still vibrating with the energy of the industrial past. The poem has the ugly/beautiful surrealism of the modern city. Its choppy alliterations remind me of effects I tried to achieve in my passage on the Venus of Willendorf, and its chain-link of lurid, atomized images resembles my associative anatomy of Emily Dickinson's fierce metaphors.

"Women Seen" is a series of cinematic glimpses of archetypal woman in her many modes, changing yet always, like Pater's Mona Lisa, the same. She fixes her sandal with a gesture seen in Greek sculpture. She is the pregnant teenager, the cocktail waitress, the little girl on her parent's lap, the woman trying on dresses in front of the multiple mirror of her and our eyes. In one vivid moment of special meaning to me, she is seen "hanging up laundry barefoot like a dancer / on a windy day, clothespins in her mouth." In our age of laundromats and automatic dryers, children have lost this old experience, detectable as early as Homer's Nausikaa episode, in which woman is fused with wind and sun, in a public ritual of ablution and renewal. It is a visual memory with its own gusty sounds and crisp fresh smell.

Kessler is sensitive to interpenetrations of nature and culture. Empty ships float "like big tulips" amid the rushing ice under the Verrazano bridge. At dawn in the snow country, "every fencepost wears a cap." "Hilltop cemetery mosses" bloom with blueberries. A lakeside spider threads a web "from red board to red board." We see "stumbling mossy boots in rusty brambles" and "the salt-white Yankee barn and house / under ice-starry barbs." In "Trills," nature plays many instruments: we hear "the shiver of wheat," "the chatter of birch," the "seething" of "the taller stiffer maples." Kessler's sharp phrases catch the motion, textures, and strange, beautiful voices of a physical world we live in but never fully know.

*The Grand Concourse* is filled with robust, if isolated beings. In "Zero," with its horse head silhouette, the war horses of Chinese, Greek, and Muslim adventure end in "the pinup stallions of gold college girls." In "Bleeding Through," "slaughterhouse cattle," bound for Chicago, groom each other. In other poems, a country cat, shooed out, "flies into the sizzling surprise" of winter, or a small city dog barks warily "right and left before stepping out." In "Going, Going," a ranting man with "white beard and black balls," roars, falls, and dies in the next hospital room, as a nurse screams. Elsewhere, a teenager, expelled from a counseling group because he does not, after all, have a brain tumor, sadly shuns home and joins the army, where he paints barracks. A queenly lady, in "pink robe charming and mandarin," waits and sleeps, "her shaved head crayoned purple for the X-ray." The most powerful figure in the book, besides the poet himself, is Kessler's father, frail but bossy, raising "his spotted smoky fist" against his large, bulky but still daunted son.

Many poems, like "A World of Men" and "South Bronx Chekhov," document the somber manners, enclosed space, and tattered souvenirs of the elderly Jews in America. There is a sense of a massive cultural era winding to its close. "God's Cigar" is a grave, resonant litany, a catalog of family objects destroyed in an apartment-house fire. The poem, moving from elegy to epic, reprises the wanderings, triumphs, and disasters of Jewish history, from Egypt and ancient Jerusalem to Russia and New York. This smaller personal Holocaust seems to be yet another dream of a remote, musing God.

*The Grand Concourse* shows Milton Kessler's range and vigor, his acute responsiveness, and his operatic ability, so obvious in class, to capture the anguish and comedy of life.

## *The Selected Letters Of George Oppen*, edited by Rachel Blau DuPlessis. Duke University Press, 1990. 436 pages.

George Oppen writes, in a 1959 letter to his sister June Oppen Degnan discussing his return to a career of poetry: "What I am trying to do I find very difficult. At the same time, it seems pointless any longer to say less." Oppen's desire not "to say less," the struggle to mean, as he often put it, is the central narrative of this extraordinary, nearly single-minded and immediately useful correspondence.

A handful of the early letters, those from 1931-34 to Pound and Williams, are mainly of historical interest, concerned with TO Press and with the publication of Oppen's first book. There are no letters here, unfortunately, from that more than two-decade span when Oppen stopped writing poetry to devote himself to radical social causes. The bulk of the letters, however, beautifully edited and introduced by Rachel Blau DuPlessis, cover the twenty-odd years during which Oppen did his major work, from *The Materials* (1962) to *Primitive* (1978). They consist primarily of Oppen's thinking on poetry, its methods and strategies, its search for reality and truth. They contain, as well, an immensely rich hoard of ancillary material: Oppen's discussion with and observations on his contemporaries such as Zukofsky, Bronk, and Reznikoff, and on Eliot, who flits through the correspondence both as standard bearer and example to be shunned. Oppen's family, politics, his travels with his wife Mary, his relations with younger and older poets, the letters demonstrate, are constellated as force fields out of which the poetry emerges.

Oppen's poetry was intimately concerned with, as he put it, "the order of disclosure," with "literature as a process of thought." So too the correspondence. Taken together, the poetry and the letters form not only an array, but a complex feedback loop by which the complexities of the work are tested fugally and dialectically: poems arise out of scraps of language formulated in response to others or in self-questionings and then

are quoted again as answers to yet other questions. Each verbal formulation or contained thought becomes a kind of hinge from which Oppen swings toward the next bit of language, hesitant, anxious, searching for its validity as social or artistic truth. Much of this drama is in the appearance of the letter, in the way Oppen uses format and spacing, the dips into the white spaces of the page, to create emphasis or to isolate a bit of phrasing. Not only were the letters vehicles for trying out various versions of a poem, of clarifying its language and intentions, they were also constructed with the same inherent logic, structuring time as they exfoliated procedurally through Oppen's confidants and readers. In this, the letters resemble Oppen's poetry to a degree found only in the way Charles Olson's letters resemble the Olson poem.

They are, as well, a kind of war tale, of serious risk undertaken, of exemplary combat with, of resistance to the environment of much of late twentieth century poetry. As with letters from the frontlines, they are about artistic and career hopes, about prophecy and suspense in the intersections of a life committed to the making of the poem. Oppen saw himself as opposed to much in the new arts, in its cinema, electronic music "or rather," as he wrote, "the music depending on hazard, the 'accidental' music, . . .the poetry which is automatic writing. . .the meaningless river which flows with ourselves and our talk." By contrast, poetry was, for him, as he says in the same letter, "brutal self-defense. . .an attempt, an utmost effort to make meaning, for who else, if it's worth asking again, has ever made meaning." Perhaps this statement will dismay some of those who have recently taken up Oppen as a forerunner, but it strikes me that Oppen made good on his claim, that the letters ought to be construed as a noble story, one that by virtue of the risks Oppen takes, mainly, to rephrase him, is about "coming out well."

Of great interest is the subtext out of which Oppen wrote. The letters reveal, first of all, the kind of demand Oppen set for himself upon returning to poetry after having lain fallow for some twenty-five years. His boundary markers, as he explained in a 1959 letter to his sister, are to not write "any statement already determined before the verse. Poetry has to be protean, the meaning must begin there," and his intention "to write one's perceptions, not argue one's belief." The letters guide one through Oppen's phenomenological and metaphysical bent, the depth at which he sought to resolve his poetics, not as window dressing to the poem's imagery but as something which was "part of one's feelings about everything." For Oppen, the resolution had to be conceptually both moral and existential, a movement between the ideal and the actual. As he wrote to John Crawford in 1966:

> . . .Everything which is not earned is corrupt—

> Fragmentation: an attempt to hide in the things one meant, really, to climb out of?
> —those materials so easily handled—it is not that they are pure. They are so easily handled because they are corrupt.
>
> Those materials which force themselves upon one, those materials which crash into one's life from atomic space and from historical space which is one's own—they can be crushing—one can almost certainly fail—but they are not corrupt. (143)

As shown here, Oppen's poetics, as ethical desiderata, amount to a thrust against an unearned theory of the word or an idle speculative aesthetics. Later, in 1976, rephrasing these thoughts, he writes to DuPlessis: "to occupy the 'idea'; to live in it—this is simply and precisely the undertaking of poetry."

At times the letters, in their almost singular brooding, display impatience and despair at the spectacle of the general picture of poetry, a poetry which had been moving in another direction than his own. "Art," he writes, "becomes (again) more and more a struggle *against* the art world, the art-attitude. . .and against little else." It was the concept of poetry, as handed down from writers such as Williams and Pound, which constituted the agon in which Oppen was continually measuring his own work. For Oppen, that part of the modernist tradition had been diluted or worse transposed by a "'middle generation'" he was to write to Denise Levertov in 1963, "[which] failed, I think. . .not because I disagree with what they say, but because they abandoned the figures of perception for the figures of elocution, of assertion, of syntax."

In this oppositional sense, Oppen saw himself as a kind of long-distance runner, shrewdly aware of the kind of poetry that he wrote, and of the resources necessary both to write such a poetry and to see it into print. And yet throughout the letters, every confident formulation of a "poetics" or rehearsal (often in prose) of a poem is undergirded by a process of concentration and thought which is meant to momentarily allay Oppen's fears and general pessimisms concerning both poetry and the cultural order. It is these fears which make of the correspondence an intimate, nearly claustrophobic affair, involving a virtual *nuclear* family of readers and responders in which Oppen saw himself as both teacher and learner, father and son. Most deeply, the people he wrote to appear to have constituted for him the only significant audience.

The letters greatly enlarge our sense of Oppen's "motive" for poetry, its intersection with his private life, his reading and the world of politics and culture in which he found himself. As we see in a very interesting letter to his friends, Max and Anita Pepper, the poet wins out over the party hack

or social engineer because the political question raised is one of scruple, of valuing "truth" whether or not it appears socially useful. For Oppen, the politics of truth was at the very center of the poetics, a constant goad which contributed to the "economy" of the poetry, an intense focus on a few central pre-occupations to the exclusion of much else. Self-understanding, as the letters continually demonstrate, could only occur (and only possibly be resolved) at the level of a highly tensed language formed under the stress of social or political pressure.

Almost nothing appears in the correspondence that is trivial or merely anecdotal. Even the descriptions of his and Mary's travels and vacationings in Maine are less news than tryouts for poems or excursions into the otherness of nature, the signature of that "most northerly" world which Oppen felt a part of and which, in both letter and poem, he posed against the Hellenic cultures of the Mediterranean. On such subjects, one already hears the music of the poetry, as when he writes to his niece, Andy Meyer:

> the rock islands, the pine trees the ocean and the little boat it's all true. Can't tell you how beautiful We came here vaguely convalescent Somehow lost our balance in New York in the last month or two—lost judgment. I was unable to write. The cruises re-establish a standard—one begins to know how good a poem must be really to exist in any considerable way in the face of the forest and rocks and ocean
>
> or how *decent* it must be in the face, if it has a face, of the little boat

One senses in reading these letters that "true north" for Oppen was attentiveness to the primary. Reflecting on his own development in a 1974 letter to Martin Rosenblum, he writes of the Objectivists not as involved in some "theoretical (technical) position" but rather "simply as the poets I found revelatory. . .and yet perhaps the word *revelatory* does define a common intention or effort—*all experience is valid*—the revelatory experience of one's own life." And so he writes to Linda Oppen Mourelatos, his daughter, in 1980: "—I am not afraid of age—for I could say, as Rilke said: 'amazement is my paradise.'"

And somehow, it seems only fitting that the last letter in the book, the last one found by DuPlessis, should be its own kind of testament concerning Oppen's entire career as poet. Here, in responding to a request by the French poet, Claude Royet-Journoud, to send him a one-line poem for an anthology, we listen to that unique admixture of ethics and poetics which made Oppen such a powerful and moving poet:

Dear Claude,

I am truly sorry to refuse anything that you ask of me, but I cannot bring myself to write 'poetic' exercises. We come back to that old saying: a poem is a poem is a poem (and never an exercise)

it is tied to the world, and the stones of the villages.
Again sorry to refuse to do anything you ask of me,

Best wishes,
George

—Michael Heller

## Marjorie Perloff, *Poetic License: Essays on Modernist and Postmodernist Lyric* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990)

Marjorie Perloff's collection of essays on modernist and postmodernist poetry—"lyric" in the title, curiously—is offered as "part of an ongoing project that I take to be a revisionist history of twentieth-century poetics" (2). That's a large task, if not a particularly uncommon one these days. The extent to which Perloff's history is revisionist—what history is not?—is of course debatable. Ten years ago Perloff's insistence on the importance of Stein, Zukofsky and (especially) writers affiliated with various avant-garde movements was clearly revisionist. That is less the case today, thanks in part to her own earlier work. Language poetry, which for Perloff has often counted as an extension of the avant-garde "traditions" she is interested in recovering, is now a regular subject of academic critical debate, even as crucial divisions become more and more evident among the writers once affiliated with the movement which is now only a little more coherent than Christianity in 150 A.D. I know that it is true that Zukofsky and others are still too often excluded from literary histories, but as an opening up of the canon Perloff's book is not especially to be recommended. Cary Nelson's *Repression and Recovery* has more and less familiar names to put forward. Perloff's canon is open and generous beside Helen Vendler's and Harold Bloom's, two of her targets, but it is still fairly exclusive (canons are by definition exclusive but some are more or less), informed as it is largely by Francophile and poststructuralist sympathies and by a distaste for the remnants of Romanticism as they are manifest in poetry and poetry criticism. In fact, let me suggest that "excluding" has become Perloff's

agenda. If hers is a revisionist project, it is because Perloff is now one of the increasingly few critics who resist claims made for writers on a purely political basis, made on behalf of a writer's status as part of a marginal or excluded social group. Perloff's praise for poets rests ultimately on the timeliness of their technique: which poets are most in accord with recent theories of language and communication? Given the prevailing tendencies of academic literary criticism and history, Perloff's discussion of prosody and, more generally, technique is rare both in its usual competence and in the central role attached to it, which not accidently is very much in accord with the central role attached to technique by the writers Perloff advocates. I might add only that timeliness—my word, not hers—while a less problematical if not less ideological evaluative term than others like sophistication or inclusiveness or the old bogey "universality," is not much of a better one. Perloff simply cannot understand why readers of Derrida, Deleuze and others aren't also more often readers of language poetry. But why read Charles Bernstein when you can read Derrida or Wittgenstein? That question is not addressed.

Let me just make one or two more general remarks, and then I will take up several of the individual essays. First, it seems to me that Romanticism as a phenomenon in French, English, and American poetry has become too unproblematical for Perloff. I would guess that her tendency to equate it with psychologism, organicism, and naive notions of subjectivity explains her reluctance to take up at much length the work of Basil Bunting, Robert Duncan, and Michael Palmer; in their work Romanticism figures more importantly. Her assault on Romanticism seems too narrowly dependent on the habits and conventions of much current mainstream poetry.

Perloff finds mainstream poetry a powerful specter, so much so in fact that she suggests that Susan Howe's "demilitarization of syntax may function. . .as a response to the all-too-ordered, indeed formulaic syntax that characterizes the typical 'workshop' poem" (305). If this were the only justification for Howe's project—it is not and Perloff knows this—it would be a rather petty and paranoid project indeed. If the enemy is Robert Richman or Rodney Jones, who needs a friend? Similarly, Howe's use of history is contrasted with Robert Lowell's and celebrated for its less condescending posture and refusal of closure, but I would think that if one were really to evaluate Howe's project fairly the comparison must be with Pound and Olson.

My second main objection must be accompanied by some praise. I admire Perloff's energy; she is indefatigable, an assimilator of much diverse and difficult international experimentalism, a careful exegete, and American critical machine. She can summon the arguments of Derrida, Barthes, Baudrillard and a host of American critics and scholars. She is truly international in her canon and her languages. Yet I often wonder what

exactly is at stake in Perloff's insistence on, say, Klebnikov's importance, or in her comparisons of texts by Charles Bernstein and Derrida. What does Perloff mean to accomplish beyond the linking and re-valuation of particular texts? Perloff can make a passing allusion to a pataphysician like Baudrillard without even so much as pausing to interrogate the implications of his work (never mind the exactness of its fit with a particular poetic). I wonder, for instance, if Perloff agrees with Baudrillard that intellectuals are likely to become of about as much consequence as Buster Keaton after the introduction of talking films? This critical machine is well-oiled; Perloff rarely doubts her own procedures and purposes. A serious Baudrillardian would no doubt ponder the fact that the deadline for this issue of *Sulfur* is January 15, 1991, and conclude that yet again events are outstripping our theories and trampling us.

Just a few remarks now about individual essays. I admire the essay on Lawrence's performative poetic, which is an effort to rescue Lawrence from Romanticism as well as his turgid novels. The essay on Ginsberg is one of the few I know that takes adequate account of the comic moments in the work and is a good account of the continuity of his work. It's true we need another Allen Ginsberg. Unfortunately, I don't see one on the horizon, unless Ron Silliman can get himself arrested. The essay about the French reception of contemporary American poetry is informative, but again the difficult questions are not addressed. What does it mean that Robert Pinsky and others have an audience in England, Michael Palmer and others in France? And what about Germany and Japan, where the reception of American poetry must be a much more complicated affair? These are partly political questions, as any CIA veteran of Cold War international cultural marketing would tell you. The essay on Plath's canon is interesting if one is interested in Plath. There is another essay on Beckett and a good brief overview of Pound's continuing importance to poetry. There is an attack on ahistorical Marxism and other vulgar political methodologies along with a plea for a thoroughly contextualized "new historicist" criticism (as represented by Jerome McGann) in the volume's first essay. I can imagine few readers who won't learn a good deal in perusing Perloff's essays, even if I think it's time that she laid all her cards on the table.

—Keith Tuma

## Harry Mathews, *20 Lines A Day* (Elmwood Park, Illinois: The Dalkey Archive Press, 1988). Harry Mathews, *Out of Bounds* (Providence, Rhode Island: Burning Deck, 1989).

There exists a domain of literature at the limits, or, rather, a domain of literature defined by limits, wherein expressive extremity is the constraint. In his two recent books, Harry Mathews beautifully calculates a world of words struck in modes of stylistic chiaroscuro. Together, these volumes establish a working definition of the literarily possible, but unless read as a pair of functionally compensatory approaches to style, the books will not suggest this definition implicitly.

Definition by way of boundaries: the temptation is, when ruminating on difference, to polarize matters not wholly in oppositional stance, and so it is when contrasting Mathews's *20 Lines A Day*, a journal devoted to starting the daily process of writing, and *Out of Bounds*, a chapbook containing lyrics on love written as love is winding down. Seen as a twinned source of necessary energy, these texts represent the impulse to be both artless and artful. The journal in which is recorded anything at hand as long as it serves to prepare the distracted mind for writing, provides a kind of informality of doing and being that only dramatizes the disciplined and lavish formality of tone, diction and design in the love lyrics obsessed with focus.

Yet *20 Lines* embodies a special kind of "naturalism." As a way of gathering skittish energy into concentration, the texts analogously suggest the exercises the legendary teacher Kimon Nicolaides assigned art students and subsequently proposed in his book *The Natural Way to Draw*. Without taking the eye off the nude, a pencil draws its corporeal contours, and what emerges is a point-by-point sensible integrity, even though the anatomical distortion may be extreme. In *20 lines* the reader often encounters a point-by-point tracing of the phenomenal body, an associative process of thought slowed down through the straitened circuitry feed-back provides the self. Tracing the introspective template slowly results in a very peculiar sort of naturalism.

*Out of Bounds*, by contrast, features artful indirection elevated to a fine extravagance. These twenty love lyrics, each in six troubled elaborate lines, tell of absence palpably:

> Any sweetness of just love is clotted with harassing bitterness,
> with killing poison
> Unless its fever, checked by the temper of two beings, yields
> joint and benign desire.

Sensitivity, in the company of sweet womanliness and my backward joy, has now utterly left her.
Pivotal Lord of the sky, allow me to have been just beckoned by a dream
That some fever abjectly swept away great beauty, allow me not to acknowledge
—This day is still not out—that that provisional sun of my birthright has sunk into a wracking fjord.

Whether courtly Elizabethan conceit (above, number 5) or modernity's version of orientalism (number 11), these defiant misreadings of style install a rhetorical surrogate for the excessive feelings of self. As Quintillian noted, self-consciousness is expressed as linguistic reach in search of nobility. The parodic artifice, then, is no less capable of re-presenting the features of desire and loss than is the painstaking act of tracing the contours of subjectivity. As a member of OuLiPo, Mathews is by no means alone in construing the self as primarily a literary construct infatuated with, and indeed endorsed by, imitative, displaced translations of style and structure. And in art, where the self as copy has only recently come into its own, Arshile Gorky may not have existed were it not for a self concocted of secondary sources. Even his love letters to his future wife were all cribbed.

Taken together, *20 Lines A Day* and *Out of Bounds* are refreshingly particular, however tactically self-conscious they may be. Mathews's writing is, after all, a poetics of extremity in practice, not merely exercises but exemplifications of the literariness put forth. It also must be said that Mathews is protean. Barthesian by nature, he conveys a deep sense of the obligation attendant upon structural matters: that to adopt a form is to install a paradigm. In these two books of antithetical discourse, lean and rich, language establishes truly alternative, indelible worlds.

## Walter Abish, *99: The New Meaning* (Providence, Rhode Island: Burning Deck, 1990).

The self as intertextuality cribbed from the written selves of others is exactly the autobiography Walter Abish proposes in "What Else?" a diary of sorts that opens his book *99: The New Meaning*. Fifty journal entries appropriated yet left unidentified and sequenced by Abish suggest the possibility that the death of the author may be here under regard as though historicized. (Cecile Abish's accompanying—excellent—photographs taken from within museums reinforce the museological cast to the entire enterprise.)

To read linearly is to read randomly—this could well be the maxim for "What Else?" as for the entire collection of verbal arrangements in *99: The New Meaning*. Discontinuity is the governing principle of a derivative and arbitrary "autobiographical" self, and if the point were not obvious, each of the entries is numbered out of sequence. (Numbers in duplicate appear in the elliptical thriller "Inside Out.") Doubtless, this *bricolage* emphasizes the givenness of individuality. Tantalizing to think about nonetheless is Abish's choice to create a reconstituted yet authentic self of the fragments of others rather than an inauthentic self of oneself. Or, at least, assuming that in some sense journals can still be construed as the subjective repository of observation and confession, then Abish allows our readerly creation to range freely over the psychological equivalent of programmes, pawn tickets and press cuttings (as Joyce might say) but also those items not found but made by the authors whose subjective journals we read as their own.

"Skin Deep" is the site of exoticism derived from the writings of Flaubert, "Reading Kafka in German," the location of ontological void. This fascinating, fine collection closes with "99: The New Meaning," teasing with a genre that eludes melodrama, more arbitrary even than this typically arbitrary artifice.

## Charles Simic, *The Book of Gods and Devils* (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1990).

Surreality inheres in some poetics as much as it does in politics, and Yugoslav-born Charles Simic is proof that with some Eastern European poets a facility for macabre disjunction is thoroughgoing. Perhaps he relies on his aptitude for conjuring dark rupture too much. In this book, produced soon after the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The World Doesn't End*, poems resourceful in creating illogical worlds wherein sudden shifts in scale of place, of sense, often give way to endings that neatly snap shut and are as expected as "snap shut." Expected, too, is the usual wardrobe of limbs, dolls, teeth. Nevertheless, several poems sustain their illogicality, expending considerable creative effort in the process; among them: "St Thomas Aquinas," "A Letter," and "The Devils." Tactics known to and inspired by Reverdy, Follain and Char precipitate an ontological dislocation with which Simic is intimate. In his best work, the dislocation is also adventurous.

## Donald Revell, *New Dark Ages* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1990).

"Twilight is espionage conducted openly," begins Revell's poem "The Judas Nocturne." The startling moments in his scenography of the commonplace are those of political and ethical disturbance infiltrating the quotidian landscape. The studied meditative drift within which disruptive insight emerges derives in part from Ashbery, carried to an extreme uninflected sameness in the work of John Koethe and in the suburban panoramas of Robert Hass. Current affairs, recent history, and myth prod the featureless landscape into configurations of consciousness, which then dismantle and settle back into featurelessness, perhaps to reconfigure again, adrift within a miasmic lyric. Revell's revisionist approach shows a convincing application of indeterminacy to a 20th-century Slough of Despond.

—Marjorie Welish

## 3 Anti-Monuments and an Elegy

Heiner Müller is the author of what might become one of the most memorable (i.e., memory maintaining and producing) theatrical works of the century, *Hamletmachine—Hamlet* read through a Brechtian lens tinted with the pain of Auschwitz and Stalin's camps. A new volume of his writings, *Explosion of a Memory*—containing poetry, prose, and all of Müller's recent performance works—was published last year by Performing Arts Journal Publications, edited and translated by Carl Weber. A synopsis of any given work, short as they all may be, would be impossible; consider his own gloss to *Explosion of a Memory/ Description of a Picture* (1984) : "DESCRIPTION OF A PICTURE may be read as an overpainting of Euripides' ALCESTIS which quotes the Noh play KUMASAKA, the Eleventh Canto of the ODYSSEY, and Hitchcock's THE BIRDS." And this to vex and mislead overambitious, as well as underambitious, recreators of the work! One strains to follow his fragmented narratives, an effort of reading thwarted at every moment by both the convolutions of the text and their horrifying iconography. As he wrote in a letter to Robert Wilson: "The dead are writing with us on the paper of the Future at which flames are already licking from all sides." Müller's speech given upon receiving the prestigious Georg Büchner Prize in 1985 was entitled, "The Wound Woyzeck"—we

might call our future considerations of his work "The Wound Müller." For memory must be a scar of the spirit, and Müller's works provide the sharp edge to create this effect.

*

Another recipient of the Georg Büchner Prize, in 1970, was Thomas Bernhard, who died last year, one of the greatest contemporary authors in the German language. He was, to quote the words of one of his characters, "an antenna on the roof to tune in the devil." The spirit of negation incarnate—where suicide is an accomplishment, illness a means of self-definition, solitude a necessity, scandal the major social relation, intellect a function of obsession, madness a means of thought, sexuality an encumbrance—Bernhard became the bad conscience of an Austria which he despised, and which despised him in turn. The tragic "completion" of his works upon his death promises a spate of critical texts. The first of these has just appeared: Chantal Thomas' *Thomas Bernhard* (Paris: Les Éditions du Seuil, 1990). This excellent overview of his entire oeuvre places Thomas Bernhard in the context of those other authors of extreme conditions and uncommon, often misanthropic, sentiments who inspired him: Schopenhauer, Proust, Otto Weininger, Fritz Zorn, Paul Wittgenstein, Kafka, Peter Handke, Heiner Müller, etc. But even more important, it reveals the Byzantine thought and the crystalline, musical style of a man who could, as his last testament, forbid all sale or portrayal of his works in his native land, and who expressed his life as "nothing but a constant will to disturb and irritate." We can only hope that Chantal Thomas' book will continue this work of disturbance and irritation.

*

A new and important anthology of writings by Jean Baudrillard, *Revenge of the Crystal* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1990), was just edited and translated by Paul Foss and Julian Pefanis. This work contains essays written between 1968 and 1983, ranging from his early theoretical critiques of consumerism and the "system of objects" to later musings on postmodernism and simulacra, seduction and mass media. The particular value of this collection of essays is to provide some of the theoretical background that subtends the Baudrillard which has become so fashionable in the cultural studies scene today. Here, the buzzwords "simulacra," "simulation," "hyper-anything and everything," "trans-aesthetic, trans-economic, trans-sexual," etc., seem to portend a theoretical dead-end where the eruption of "fashionable" thought (indeed, sometimes of nonsense) within theory might well proffer a new nihilism. Yet when considered within the earlier theoretical framework presented here, we can gain a new perspective on Baudrillard's more recent, quasi-journalistic texts, and read them as something other than the pop-theory that they are in danger of becoming.

*

In the very years that European art was transformed by the birth of a radical modernism, Miguel de Unamuno devoted himself to the renewal of an ancient tradition: the mystical poem. *El Cristo de Velázquez*, written between 1913 and 1920, is a book-length sacred poem of religious passion, lyrical delicacy, and Baroque complexity. Inspired by a Valásquez crucifixion, it is certainly one of the greatest texts ever written on a painting. This poem exists in the tradition of allegorical verse originating in the *Song of Songs*, poetry whose symbolism combines cosmic, corporeal, and Biblical elements in a total hymn to God. Must we read Unamuno's work as an anachronism (a great but belated mystical tract), or is it rather a modernist anomaly (in a world where we might tend to give more literary credence to the paranoid schizophrenic "theology" expressed in Daniel Paul Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* than to more orthodox inspirational literature)? Regardless, Unamuno's version of the theological drama of Christ bears a fascination far beyond the sheer expression of faith. As just one example, consider the obsessive presentation of the whiteness of Christ and his symbols, manifested on almost every page of the poem, and perhaps surpassing even the mania of *Moby Dick*. The blackness of the void and the redness of blood stand out all the more boldly against this colorless field of symbols, against such symbolic purity. Unamuno had wished to create this poem as a formulation of the Spanish people's faith; whether it can be read as such today is certainly questionable. Nevertheless, it is a majestic example of the allegorical symbolization of human physiognomy in the service of theology. This poem has just been brilliantly translated into French by Jacques Munier, as *Le Christ de Velázquez* (Paris: La Différence, 1990)—we must certainly press for an equivalent English translation of this work.

—Allen S. Weiss

## Further Sightings

"Poetry is an expenditure of language 'without goal,' in fact a redundancy; a constant sacrifice to sacrifice," writes Arkadii Dragomoschenko in *Description* (Sun & Moon Press). This book defines a new direction in Russian poetry: neither officially Soviet nor officially (rhetorically) dissident: "What makes Arkadii Dragomoschenko's work so interesting and valuable," Michael Molnar writes in his introduction, "is that he continues to withstand the pressure of that authoritative voice and its misplaced

confidence that the right language need only be invoked to constitute an ideal subjectivity." Dragomoschenko's is a poetry filled with meditative fluidity and imaginative iridescences. "Responsibility," he writes, "is a mode of hearing." Lyn Hejinian and Elena Balashova have exceeded any possible expectations of translators: it's hard to believe these are not in some ways originally composed in the "American." "Poetry," says the 44-year-old Leningrad poet, and former stoker, whose first Soviet-published book is not yet one year old, "is that state of language which in its workings constantly exceeds the actual order of truth. . . . Courage consists in an unending affirmation of thought which overcomes 'the order of actual truth' itself."

Back in the U.S.A., a revolution in poetic language seems to have hit the far-off Broadway New York theater, with two poets, Fiona Templeton and Mac Wellman, leading a way that had seemed largely blocked by the obsessive literalism, emotional hyperventilation, and clever Mametry of the reigning "serious" theater of the 80s. Hardly since Robert Wilson's *Letter for Queen Victoria*—or any of Richard Foreman's dazzling Ontological Hysteric Theater productions—has richly complex poetic language been allowed such free play on the New York stage as in the recent productions of Wellman and Templeton.

So far, the height of Wellman's theatrical work was last season's *Terminal Hip*—a fantastic full-length monologue of turns and spins and flips, a kind of *ars de* rant or stream of agitation that Wellman has made his specialty, and which is suggested by the most recent of his scripts to be published, *Bad Penny* (Sun & Moon's Corner Books).

Fiona Templeton's *You—the City* (Roof Books) represents a remarkable innovation in the structure of theatrical presentations: the play was performed for each spectator, one at a time, by a string of actors, one leading you to the next, in the streets surrounding Times Square. This method of personalizing the size and focus of the drama was powerful enough, but the dense, at times bizarre, at times wrenching, script, as much a study of language textures as of characters, made for an indelible experience of having poetry "conversed" at you.

Two other equally remarkable productions—both one-person shows and both essentially explorations of the possibility of a moral bearing in a world torn from its bearing—should at least be noted in this context: Eric Bogosian's multiple-personality shticks in *Sex, Drugs & Rock 'n' Roll* and Wally Shawn's haunting imaginary memoir *Fever*.

Over the past five years, the most dynamic constellation of newly publishing poets in North America has centered around Vancouver's galvanizing Kootenay School of Writing (KSW). Initial publication for many of these writers was an excellent series of chapbooks from Tsunami Editions, edited by Larry Timewell (Bremner). Other forums include KSW's

own *Writing* (edited by Colin Browne and now by Jeff Derksen and Nancy Shaw), *The Raddle Moon* (edited by Susan Yarrow (Clark )), and more recently *Motel* (edited by Kathryn MacLeod, Doug Stetar, Julia Steele, and Lisa Marr); all of which have been abetted by Proprioception Books (Lisa Robertson, proprietor: 207 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 1H7). This Fall, an anthology of the new Vancouver writing (KSW and related tendencies), edited by Bremner, Robertson and Miriam Nichols, was brought out as a special premier issue of *West Coast Line*. (*West Coast Line* is the successor to the immensely useful *Line*, which in its new form continues to be edited from Simon Fraser University by Roy Miki). *West Coast Line* #1 features new work by many, though alas not all, of the KSW company (in what must be Northern modesty, the editors have left themselves out): 19 poets, in addition to a number of visual artists, are featured, including, of those not mentioned so far, Deanna Ferguson, Calvin Wharton, Peter Culley, Gerald Creed, Steven Forth, Dan Farrell, Judy Radul, and Adeena Karasick, with statements on poetics from nine of the poets and a review of the Tsunami series by Fred Wah. The Fall has also brought two full-length collections from Talonbooks by KSW poets: Dorothy Trujillo Lusk's *Redactive* and Derksen's exceptional *Down Time*.

What Alan Davies lacks in *Candor* (O Books ) he makes up for with his own particular brand of Newfoundland chutzpa. This blunt mix of topical reviews and ruminative poems, literary theory and erotic facts, breaks down the inherent aestheticization (anaestheticization) of the poetic text, pushing it, sometimes kicking and singing, into the world, where Davies has the peculiar notion it may (does) belong. It's not that I agree with Alan, or not, or that he would with himself; it's the enormously articulating intensity and the brandished (searing) lyricism. He spills over the borders of *Candor* and into *Life* (Case Books), an equally profound sounding of found moments of presence. Both books highly recommended for specialists in the particular vectors of the human circumstance and the possibility for poetry in face of such lacerating incontrovertabilities.

Robert Creeley outdoes, or more precisely redoes, or more to the point undoes, himself in *Autobiography*—a hundred tiny pages from Hanuman that manage, against all generic expectations, to stay acutely charged and lucidly reflective at the same time. Creeley seems to be constantly rethinking the terms and conditions that give any possible grounding to what only by aerial view gets called a 'life'; it's as if such stubborn preoccupation has made his "provision": a provisional vision of being in, of writing coming out of, a restless encounter with the undefinable: "A meager emphasis finally, but the world has hardly been a nice place to live in. . . . When young, I'd written Olson with almost pious explanation: 'Form is never more than an extension of content.' Now I might say equally, 'Content is never more than an extension of form.' It depends, as they say in New England."

Susan Howe also, and determinately, stays in New England; two fundamental collections of her work have been issued this past year: *The Europe of Trusts* (Sun & Moon) and *Singularities* (Wesleyan University Press); *Talisman* #4 features a Howe section, including a revealing, spirited interview. Meanwhile, back West, Laura Moriarty's *Rondeaux* (Roof Books) makes palpable the resources of the exploding lyric—those recent works that reframe, with a sense of troubled potentiality, certain lyric textures and moods; in contrast, Moriarty's *like roads* (Kelsey St. Press) bounces off of a more phrasal patterning of isolation and recombining.

There's so much coming in it makes for difficulties to stop, impossibilities to keep up with even a modicum of what the work in hand demands—deserves. Right now I'm up to Michelle Wallace's *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory* (Verso), which collects many of her essays on black feminism, popular culture, and literary theories: "It's not a matter of being for or against Western Civilization. We are all victims of it. It's time to consider that the classics may, in fact, make more sense to some of us as records of blindness to the plight of the world's majorities, than as sublime masterpieces.... That doesn't mean that we don't need to read and analyze them. It means we need to keep our eye on the ball."

—Charles Bernstein

## Noticings

"I don't find solitude agonizing, on the contrary. Holes in the paper open and take me fathoms from anywhere."

Samuel Beckett, 1959

"And as Klaus Kinski lies in bed with his secretary he strokes her breasts; then he lets his hand sink slowly, watching himself as he does so, completely fascinated by the movement of his hand and by her breasts, in a way that suggests he never wants to stop the movement, so that there isn't a cut for ages, and the last finger is touching the breast for an eternity."

Wim Wenders on Edgar Wallace's *The Face in the Dark*

Charlie Watts talking about going to hear Art Taylor; "You never heard everything he had until you saw him play live."

Godard on how he never intended to be a filmmaker: "I was just passing by, but I stayed."

"We have to run faster than beauty, so it will appear that we are turning our backs on it."

Picasso to Cocteau

"There is no logic here.
Logic forbade this.
All that we value:
order, remembrance,
human nature and conduct,
mutual coherence—
What do they avail when this art
dictates its laws."

Robert Duncan, *The Venice Poem*

"the time is for coming close, Useless
verbs shooting the other words far away"

John Ashbery, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

"Instrument always less than the music"

Cecil Taylor, *Ell Moving Track*

"Poetry is language that becomes so excited that it is endlessly creative of message."

Robert Duncan, 1969

Cecil Taylor going to see Billie Holiday at 12: "And there it came, with a live flower in its hair, every movement was grace, and what could I do?"

"In the neuter austerity of that terrain all phenomena were bequeathed a strange equality and no one thing nor spider nor stone nor blade of grass could put forth claim to precedence. The very clarity of these articles belied their familiarity, for the eye predicates the whole on some feature or part and here was nothing more luminous than another and nothing more enshadowed and in all the optical democracy of such landscapes all preference is made whimsical and a man and a rock become endowed with unguessed kinships."

Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*

I don't want to know how to write.
I want to commit the act of words.
"Hipsters of America in the 1950s sitting in a dim room—
the clash of the streets beyond the window's bare soft sill."

Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans*

"my mind plays in the distance"
Robin Blaser, *'It springs on you'*

"But all living art will be irrational, primitive, and complex; it will speak a secret language and leave behind documents not of edification but of paradox."
Hugo Ball, 1915

"Anyone who does not smell of cooked bomb and compressed vertigo is not worthy of being alive."
Antonin Artaud, *Van Gogh, The Man Suicided By Society*

"I enter many directions, the synchron and coming together of time, in order to find words which are not alone."
"The seat of language in the Other is the necessary exploration."
Robin Blaser, *The Stadium of the Mirror*

Jazz stopped at freedom.
"Language obeyed flares tongues in obscure matter"
Robert Duncan, *Food For Fire, Food For Thought*

". . .dimly he was aware that when everything had been understood, there would be only the solved puzzle before him, a black wall of certainty. He would know, but nothing would have meaning, because the knowing was itself the meaning; beyond that there was nothing to be known."
Paul Bowles, *The Spider's House*

"Essence of stuff won't do"
"I like the bliss of mind"
"My mind rings with a thousand iced lizard windows
I have no words for neutral"
"Tie it all together, Jack, the mirror doesn't show
the real right"
Jack Kerouac, *Old Angel Midnight*

"Writing means, among other things, not knowing what you're doing, being unable to judge it—there's certainly a bit of that in a writer, a blinding light."
"And I said one ought to write without making corrections, not necessarily at full tilt, no, but at one's own pace and in accordance with what one is experiencing at the time; one ought to eject what one writes, manhandle it almost, yes, treat it roughly, not try to trim profusion but let it be part of

the whole, and not tone down anything either, whether its speed or its slowness, just leave everything as it is when it appears"

Marguerite Duras, *Emily L.*

"Improvisation is the capability to talk to oneself"

Cecil Taylor, 1984

"He, the artist, knows the meaning of a thing is not its truth; this knowledge is a wisdom, a foolish wisdom, one might say, because it removes him from the community (but also) from the company of the arrogant and the fanatic."
"The object represented vibrates, to the detriment of dogma."
"to make meaning subtle is therefore a secondary political activity, as is any attempt to deplete, disturb, and undo the fanaticism of meaning."
"The artist's primary fragility is this: he is part of a changing world, but he, too, is changing. This is banal, but for the artist it is dizzying, because he never knows if the work he is proposing is a product of the changing world or of the changing of his own subjectivity."
"the incessant scruple that tears the artist apart, between solitude and gregariousness"

Roland Barthes, *Dear Antonioni. . .*

"extremely random order that cannot be described as accidental"

Robert Rauschenberg

". . .infinite completion, the joyful
mysterious essence of Arrangement"

Jack Kerouac, *The Scripture of the Golden Eternity*

"But how to say this. . . There are no pronouns.
The I, he, me—none of that works.
. . .Nothing is sayable."

Samuel Beckett, 1977

Nobody believes the way anything ends anymore.

—Clark Coolidge

## The Master of the Little Box

Vasko Popa who died on January 5th of this year was the greatest and the most original poet of the postwar Yugoslavia. I met him first in the spring of 1970 when he came to the United States to give readings and attend a poetry conference at the Library of Congress. I had been translating his poetry and corresponding with him for several years, so it felt like we already knew each other. It was in New York, where he spent a few weeks after his tour, that we got to be friends.

That year I had left my job at the photography magazine *Aperture* to write and live off readings. So, I had plenty of time to keep Popa company. He didn't speak English. The State Department had provided him with an interpreter, but he preferred my services. I'd arrive at his hotel right after breakfast and we'd spend the day together. Vasko had some business appointments. Being an editor in a publishing house in Belgrade, he was paying courtesy calls on a number of houses that he had dealings with in the past. Mostly, however, we just walked the streets and talked.

What made these conversations interesting is what they revealed about how Popa wrote and thought about poetry. Twenty years ago my own impulses as a poet were uncomfortably divided between Surrealism and Objectivism of W.C. Williams and his followers. The poem for me was still mostly an inspired and unpremeditated utterance. Popa, on the other hand, was all calculation. A poem was almost an act of criticism. "This is what must be done now," he would say and mean that in relationship to the history of Modernism or the history of Serbian literature.

This approach surprised me and almost repelled me at first. As it turned out, Popa had already thought out everything he was going to write for the rest of his life. Once late at night, after much wine, he described to me in detail his future poems. He wasn't putting me on. In later years I'd see these poems come into print one by one.

"Chess problems," said Nabokov and he could have been speaking of Popa, "demand from the composer the same values that characterize all worthwhile art: originality, invention, conciseness, harmony, complexity and splendid insincerity."

THE LITTLE BOX

The little box gets her first teeth
And her little length
Little width little emptiness
And all the rest she has

The little box continues growing
The cupboard that she was inside
Is now inside her

And she grows bigger bigger bigger
Now the room is inside her
And the house and the city and the earth
And the world she was in before

The little box remembers her childhood
And by a great great longing
She becomes a little box again

Now in the little box
You have the whole world in miniature
You can easily put in a pocket
Easily steal it easily lose it

Take care of the little box.

Popa had a firm belief that in poetry less is more. He wrote only seven short books of short poems. He had a rigorous, almost classical conception of the art. His literary ancestors were the Surrealists, but temperamentally and intellectually he was closer to Paul Valery. There was something ascetic about this poet who loved to eat and drink well. "You're a Byzantine icon painter and not a Marxist," I told him once.

This business of Marxism was very odd. Popa would profess belief in it while talking of spiritual matters. He was interested in alchemy and various kinds of esotericism, for example. Marxism obviously explained only the here and now. As for the rest, one had to seek elsewhere.

Popa's metaphysics was Symbolist. And yet, it's not so much that he used symbols in his poetry. What he really wanted to understand is the secret of how symbols are made. Poetry is sacred action, it's been said. Popa's poems demonstrate how the laws of the imagination work.

The poet listens to language. There's a kind of 4th dimension within language, a dimension where myth begins.

"The salad bird," writes Lucian, "is an enormous bird covered all over with salad greens instead of feathers; its wings look exactly like lettuce leaves."

For Popa language was not an abstract system, but a spoken idiom. He found his poems in the deepest recesses of idiomatic language. In that respect, his imagination and his poetry come from a distinct geography and

culture. In his poems the American reader lives for a time with the gods and demons of the Serbians.

—Charles Simic

## Barbaric Lyricism

"And the tact of it! I like that most of all! That is the quality in which the French excel—finesse it is called—what we name tact: a right disposition of tints, colors,—regarding fine distinctions. . . .No doubt the French are masters there—no one sees it, bathes in it—more enjoyably than I do. But then, while we miss that, is there not something to compensate for it? Sarrazin speaks of America—that she gives him the barbaric lyricism of the Hebrews—how fine that! And I, for one, am content with that—the rest I am willing to let go! I think a subdued sarcasm lurks in the phrase—or perhaps not, though I think I see it there. An old wharf, the decayed, rotted, soaked, beams, pilings: the debris: the grass-grown, mossy endings, surfaces—Oh! they appeal to me most of all. Many, many, many years ago—in New York—up towards Harlem—Mott Haven—there was an old wharf on which I spent some of the happiest days of my life. An old dilapidated, ruining, breaking, wharf there, with sea-weed—sea-drift—caught in its sharp corners: and a slight whiff of salt air—just enough for a reminder—and the flowing waters—and on and on—and the boats—craft—of all sorts. Oh! It is the surpassing remembrance—barbaric lyricism!"

Walt Whitman talking to Traubel (1889) quoted from *Camden Journals*

When they seized power in the year 750, the House of Abbasid, descendents of the Prophet's uncle, acquired an empire of distant reach from India to the Atlantic coast of Europe. Twelve years later, on a day fixed by a Persian astrologer for the prominence of Jupiter, work began on their new capital, Madinat as-Salam, the City of Peace. As center of the empire and image of the world, the city was built in the form of a circle divided by a cross; its four gates the four directions to the four corners of the earth.

For 500 years, though the edges of the empire eroded and broke off, the city—still known by the name of the village it had replaced, Baghdad—luxuriated. The most cosmopolitan city in the world of that time, with ships docked—there at the confluence of the Euphrates and Tigris—from China,

India, Russia, Spain, the North and Black African kingdoms; with its schools of painting, poetry, philosophy, astronomy, philology, mathematics; its translations of the Greek texts that would ultimately impel the European Renaissance; where fortunes could be quickly made and even more quickly spent. (Sinbad, for one, became a sailor because he had dissipated an enormous inheritance on evening entertainment and "costly robes.") Perennial symbol of the metropolis as pleasure palace: I write from a city once known, not so long ago, as Baghdad on the Hudson.

The poets of that city—particularly in its first 300 years—were noted for their rejection of traditional verse forms, their unembarrassed hedonism in many varieties, their scorn for religious and social orthodoxies, their sycophancy in court and their bitter polemics outside it, their elaborate prosodic techniques and increasingly pedantic literary criticism.

Their form of choice was the *qit'a,* literally a "fragment"—not so much a modernist shard from a vanished whole as an arrow of light in the gloom, a twinge of perfection, as in the famous couplet (an entire poem) by the 8th century poet Abbas Ibn al-Ahnaf:

> When she walks with her girl servants
> Her beauty is a moon between swaying lanterns

[The translation is by Abdullah al-Udhari and George Wightman, from their Birds through a *Ceiling of Alabaster.* ]

The misanthropic, anti-clerical, skeptical, metaphysical, blind anchorite poet Abu al-Ala al-Ma'arri (973-1052) is generally considered to be their greatest. It is said that Dante read him in translation, and one could easily mistake the couplet that closes this poem by Ma'arri (same translators) as yet one more eerie and exact image from the *Commedia:*

> Each sunset warns quiet men who look ahead
> That light will end; and each day postman Death
>
> Knocks on our door. Although he does not speak,
> He hands us a standing invitation.
>
> Be like those skeleton horses which scent battle
> And fear to eat. They wait chewing their bridles.

Ma'ari wrote:

> Some people are like an open grave:
> You give it the thing you love most
> And get nothing in return.

And, a thousand years ago in Baghdad, he wrote a line that, in New York in late January 1991, made me—if only for a few hours—turn off the television:

> Don't let your life be governed by what disturbs you.
>
> —Eliot Weinberger

# Edmond Jabès

# 1912–1991

Très tôt, je me suis trouvé face à l'incompréhensible, à l'impensable, à la mort.

Depuis cet instant, j'ai su que rien, ici-bas, n'était partageable parce que rien ne nous appartient. . . .

Very early I found myself faced with the incomprehensible, the unthinkable, death.

Since that moment I have known that down here nothing could be shared, because nothing belongs to us. . . .

Le Livre du Partage
The Book of Shares

# CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

ERRATA: re *The Selected Letters of George Oppen*, ed. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Duke University Press, 1990, reviewed in this issue. RBD writes: "The cover and frontispiece photograph of George Oppen was taken by Richard Friedman. This attribution was not made in the text. The editor regrets very much her unintentional oversight of Mr. Friedman's work and requests that readers and users of the text make the correction in their copy." A new packaging of BARBARA MOR'S *The Great Cosmic Mother*, with color plates by Monica Sjoo, will be out in May, 1991 (Harper/San Francisco). *The Complete Poems of Blaise Cendrars* (translated by RON PADGETT) is forthcoming from the University of California Press, late 1991. Padgett's recent books include *The Big Something* and *Supernatural Overtones* (with Clark Coolidge) both published by The Figures. The first of KAREN KELLEY'S "Virtual Reality" series will appear in *O Books* Anthology. "Virtual Reality #4" will appear in *avec* #5. LARRY GOODELL'S *Firecracker Soup* is available from Cinco Puntos Press, El Paso; his *The Mad New Mexican* (songs 1981–86), is from Ubik Sound, Albuquerque. PAMELA WYE is an artist living in NYC; she recently published an article on Nancy Spero in *ARTS Magazine*. WOLFGANG GIEGERICH'S essays have appeared in *Sulfur*, and Hillman's *Spring* Annual. EMILE SNYDER, Professor Emeritus of French and African Literature at Indiana University, has published a number of collections of poetry in French, and has translated two books by Aimé Césaire. WILLIAM CORBETT'S *Don't Think: Look* will appear from Zoland Books, Fall 1991. DAVID BROMIGE'S *Men, Women, and Vehicles* was recently published by Black Sparrow; his *Tiny Courts* will be published by Brick Books in Canada later this year. Sun & Moon Press (Los Angeles) has recently published CLARK COOLIDGE'S *Sound as Thought: Poems 1982-1984*. RONALD GONZALEZ'S most recent sculptural installation was *Turning Bodies Into Souls*, INTAR Gallery, NYC, 1990. BRUCE ANDREWS' *Executive Summary* (Potes & Poets) and *I Don't Have Any Paper So Shut, or Social Romanticism* (Sun & Moon) will appear this spring. MILTON KESSLER continues to access notebooks 1965 on, working on *Atrocity of the Ornate*, based on Assyrian Royal Inscriptions, first noted at British Museum, 1970. FORREST GANDER'S books are *Rush to the Lake* (Alice James) and *Eggplants and*

*Lotus Root;* the anthology he edited, *Mouth to Mouth: New Poetry by 12 Mexican Women,* is forthcoming this year. AARON SHURIN'S newest chapbook is *Narrativity; Into Distances* is forthcoming (both Sun & Moon). SUSAN HOWE'S *The Europe of Trusts* (Sun & Moon) appeared in 1990. Wesleyan University Press has recently issued her *Singularities.* DONALD REVELL'S third collection of poems, *New Dark Ages,* has recently been published by Wesleyan. PAM REHM has just started the Materials Press. CHRIS STROFFOLINO'S poems have recently appeared in *New American Writing, Mirage, GPWTTD,* and *American Letters & Commentary.* ESTHER ALLEN has just completed a translation of Octavio Paz's book on Xavier Villarrutia. MONIQUE CHEFDOR, who founded the Blaise Cendrars International Society in 1978, has recently finished editing the correspondence of Blaise Cendrars and Jacques-Henri Levêque, to be published by Denoël. CAMILLE PAGLIA is the author of *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson.* She teaches humanities at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. CHANTAL THOMAS most recently published *Thomas Bernhard* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), and *La Reine scélérate: Marie-Antoinette dans les pamphlets* (Paris: Seuil, 1989). ALLEN S. WEISS is the author of *The Aesthetics of Excess* (Albany, SUNY Press, 1989); his *Miroirs de l'infini: Le jardin à la française et la métaphysique au XVII siècle* is forthcoming from Le Seuil.

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Cid Corman

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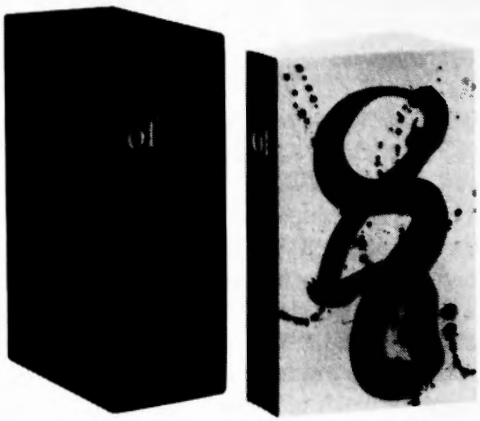

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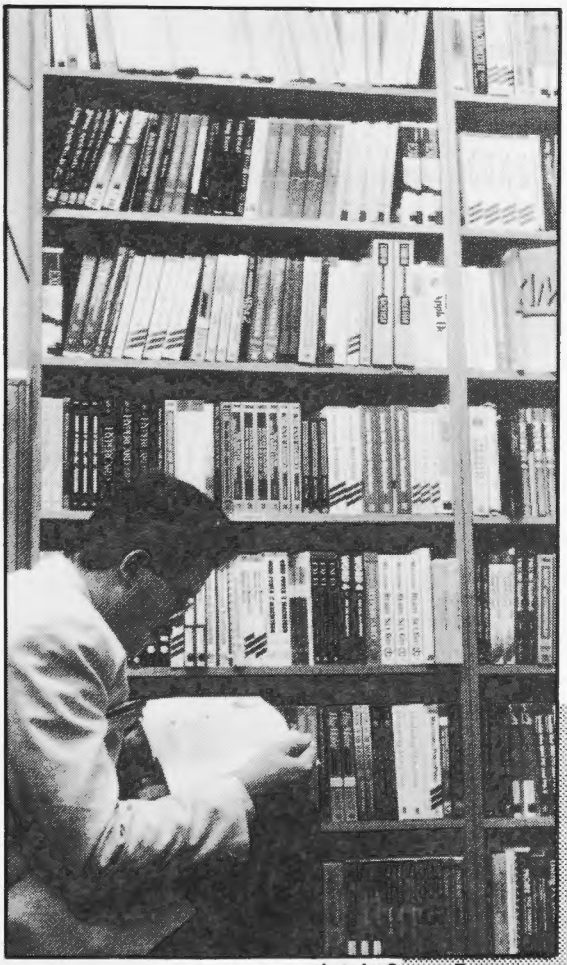

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